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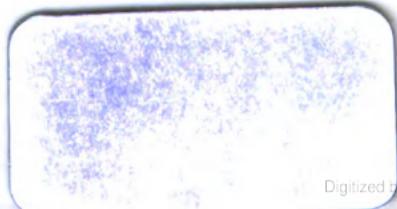
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A HIDDEN ONE BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

A HIDDEN ONE

BROUGHT TO LIGHT;

OR MEMOIR OF

ELIZABETH GOW.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF, AND EDITED BY THE

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GREENOCK.



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A Hidden One Brought to Light.

INTRODUCTION.

A few remarks introducing the narrative and papers that follow.

“Gather up the fragments which remain that nothing be lost.”

THIS would not be easy to find a child of God whose history admits of being given in fewer words than the individual about to come under notice;—for after we have told that Elizabeth Gow was born—converted—tried—sanctified—and called home, there is little more to relate concerning her. Her's was a narrow sphere, and a simple life; she was known to God, but unknown to most beside.

Still, as every man has a course of his own—determined by circumstances and powers—so has every believer his own experience, moulded by temperament, position, and discipline. And, accordingly, though in the case of our Hidden Disciple,

there be no picturesque scenes, or startling incidents, there are exercises of soul, and features of character—quiet struggles with evil, and holy triumphs through grace, which it cannot be wrong to preserve, and may be useful to contemplate—realizing, as these will do to many, what themselves have felt, and showing also how they are to conquer. It is not without advantage, to learn, if we must be tried, “that no temptation hath taken us”—no doubt perplexed us—no fear made us sad, “but such as is common to man.”

The Papers of Elizabeth Gow have not the variety which imparts interest to “the Memoir of Marion Laird”—nor do they exhibit the liveliness which forms so pleasing an attraction in those of “Marion Shaw”—far less, can they be said to indicate the mental vigour which distinguished “Elizabeth West.” These believers, who lived as saints and could have died as martyrs, shone with a lustre peculiarly bright, and their memory will not soon be forgotten in our land. Nevertheless, as the delineation of what a renewed soul can attain to in the enjoyment of Christ, and can accomplish for His name—in a lot humble as that which these worthies occupied, and with more ordinary gifts than theirs—the Narrative which follows well deserves attention, whatever be our condition and duties ; whilst it will be found especially suitable for those in the same rank and occupation with Elizabeth Gow.

It too often happens that what goes under the name

of Spiritual Experience is rather the discovery of sin than the development of grace, and is more fitted to depress, by querulously showing what is in the heart of man, than to animate and gladden, by brightly revealing what is in the heart of God. This objection, however, does not lie against the present memoir—but in the instance of Elizabeth Gow we can comfortably trace the workings of a soul which lived, and moved, and had its being in the love of a reconciled Trinity. The work of Christ was the foundation of her peace—the love of Christ was the sunshine of her day—the person of Christ had to her the charm of a present friend ; and it is to Christ in all His surpassing excellence, not to herself as encompassed with infirmities, that she delights to point us. *“If the blessed Jesus would say to me, What would ye that I should do unto you? I would answer, Lord! that I may see Thy matchless beauty—my Saviour! in the glory of His person, and suitableness of His offices. This only constitutes a Christian.”*

Our Hidden One was not without her seasons of darkness ; and she who for a time had rejoiced with a song upon her lips, became silent, and feeble, and full of complaint. *“I was as one distracted; and in this state I continued some days, during which time I was ready to die through agony of mind. I slept none, and could not eat.”* But the cloud though very dark passed rapidly away, and nothing could be more simple or direct than the assurance which succeeded. With ear-

nest and unhesitating confidence she claimed as her own all that the promises contain, and every power of her soul went out after the Son of God. "*My beloved is mine and his desire is towards me, were words which brought a persuasion along with them that I had an interest in the Lord Jesus as my Saviour and Redeemer, and I could do nothing but wonder at the matchless love of Christ to me.*"

At one period, Elizabeth Gow, it will be seen, stumbled at the doctrine of Assurance as laid down by Walter Marshall* in "The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification:" and she was even ready to conclude that if his views were scriptural, her experience must be delusive. In the end, however, she came to see that as faith rests on the Word alone, so must assurance—which is just faith in its highest acting—and not less was she convinced, that, so far from assurance, any more than faith, being the result of holiness, and joy, and peace, these graces must owe their vigour to assurance, even as it is in faith they have their root. We may venture to add, that though on the whole, Marshall's positions are accurate, he has occasionally stated them in a manner calculated to perplex, so that with every desire "to make her calling and election sure," it is not unlikely that Elizabeth Gow was confirmed by him in her own erroneous concep-

* Vicar of Hursley. He was ejected in 1662, and published "The Mystery," 1692. Keble became Vicar of the same Hursley, 1835.

tions, and left for a time the prey of doubt and uneasiness. "Assurance," says the author of "The Gospel Mystery," "is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing, but we must work it out in ourselves;" and by that single sentence, turning the eye inward, he had led this believer to establish her peace, not on the covenanted promises, but on the precarious quicksand of her own frames. This, however, was only the fallacy of an hour, and shortly afterwards, relying on the bare word, she could declare, He has promised—I am safe. *"It is the business of faith to rely on the faithfulness of God in the promises; but I saw I had been putting my frames in the room of Christ; and looking to these frames more than to the love that is in Jesus, my delight in God was abated. Again, I was favoured with the delightful persuasion of my own interest in the work of saving sinners by His death, and I could anticipate that joyful day when I should sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

Having entered into the rest of Christ, Elizabeth Gow cheerfully received His yoke, and sought to frame her walk after the example of "the meek and lowly One." If not a cedar of Lebanon, she was a lily of the valley, and her humility was as fragrant as it was real. The stream could not be said to be broad, and as it flowed along, it made no noise, yet the purity of its water was remarked by all. Her candlestick was by no means tall, but the light she gave, was clear and steadfast, "and shone more and

more unto the perfect day." "*I want to have a saving and heart-purifying knowledge of myself and the Lord Jesus. I am truly a useless branch in the Lord's vineyard; yet it is not for want of pruning under various trials, and also of many precious seasons of watering and consolation. It is strange, however, that I never grow stronger or more fruitful under all these dealings; and this makes me long to be beneath the meridian beams of the Sun of Righteousness, that I may bring forth fruit to the praise of the glory of His grace, and be in some happy measure conformed to His image.*"

From her youth up, Elizabeth Gow cherished a sensitive dread of sin in every form, and her "delight was in the law of God." But the tenderness of her conscience only increased with her years, and diligently did "she cleanse the inside of the platter," that the outside might be also without spot. Narrowly watching the springs of action within the soul, and keeping her eye believably fixed on Him by whose Love she sought to be constrained, whilst His Example was her standard, she was faithful beyond most, in every relation of life; and whether as a daughter, or a friend—a neighbour, or a member of the Church, beautifully did she show that "the doctrine of grace is according to godliness." "*I began now to be much exercised about my mother;*" "*and I also got answers to prayers in respect of some acquaintances.*" "*After the fatigues of a busy day she spent half the night in praying for the family where*

she served.” “I was much distressed too about the state of the Church,” “and I kept a day of fasting on account of the low state of religion.”

So far as appears, Elizabeth Gow had not read a great deal, for she had but few Hours that could be called her own, and fewer Books. The Word of God, however, was her companion and counsellor ; and, as it ever does, when studied for the life it contains, and taught by Him who wrote it, it made the simple wise—it imparted strength to the weak. Deriving her knowledge of doctrine from the knowledge of Scripture, her views, if not striking or new, were eminently clear and correct ; whilst they were rendered uniformly subservent to her increase in all that should distinguish the believer from the world. *“I used to read much in my Bible before, but it was to gratify my curiosity. Now, these places which edified and quickened me were precious to me, and I found much sweetness in them.*

Nor was it from *one* well of salvation only that Elizabeth Gow drew her joy and strength, but *every* ordinance was to her a means of grace. Secret duty, she never neglected ; Christian fellowship, she affectionately cultivated ; the preaching of the Word was sweeter than honey to her taste ; and as the hart panteth for the water brooks, she longed for Communion seasons. *“In private duties I found so much delight that I could not live without them.” “It was now night, and I was in my favourite upper-room praying; and I enjoyed much nearness to a three-one God.” “I met a person with*

whom I conversed, and was much refreshed. I desired she would carry on a Correspondence with me. She also introduced me to several others—lively shining Christians. I could not tell what to think of the Lord's goodness to me.” “I was sweetly feasted every Sabbath with the Gospel, and found equal satisfaction in sweet prayer, reading, and meditation.” “The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed, and at the prospect of this my heart was glad. I could not help wondering at the goodness of God in bringing me to a place where Gospel ordinances are in such plenty and purity, and where I had so often access to a communion table, where I enjoyed such sweet fellowship with the true God.” “Every day was to me as a Sabbath, and every Sabbath like a communion-day.”

Had Elizabeth Gow been drawn from a deep pit of open sin, and raised to an unusual elevation in holiness, her narrative would more readily command attention, and her name be pronounced by many. But we characterise her simply as one who, “leaning on the Beloved,” “walked with God,” and are satisfied that all who desire to combine the Saint with the Believer would do well to have respect unto her course. Washing her robes daily in the blood of the Lamb, she rejoiced to meet a Holy God in all the paths of righteousness; and the fruit of her example will be blessed indeed, if thereby we too are “led to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

In many cases those who have been brought to God in childhood or youth have had their days shortened in the midst; and from the perusal of such accounts, early death has come to be gloomily associated with early conversion in the mind of not a few, as if the one inferred the other. The family circle, indeed, and the Sabbath class, almost shrink from hearing that some boy or girl had their heart opened of the Holy Ghost, lest they should next be told that immediately he grew sick and died. It is one advantage, however, of the present memoir, that Elizabeth Gow, though called by the grace of God sooner than many, grew up to womanhood, and lived to a good old age. When no more than fifteen, and even needing to be guided by her Minister along the passage which led to the Communion Table, she publicly gave herself to Christ; and throughout the whole of her after life, long and various as it was, she steadfastly "walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." To *the young*, therefore, we would earnestly commend these records: for, if prayerfully read, what is fitted to be useful to all, will be found replete both with special interest and special blessing to them; and a voice from the dead will proclaim, "that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace."

If, as the servant of a *heavenly Master*, Elizabeth Gow has left footsteps in the sand, which may help to guide the wanderer and comfort the weary, she has also bequeathed most important lessons as the servant

of *an earthly master*—and as “shewing all good fidelity” in the station to which she was called, in the providence of God, she has taught those who are similarly situated, how they may not only steadily profess, but eminently “*adorn*” the doctrine of God our Saviour, in their obscure, yet momentous position.

It was formerly the case in Scotland, that *Domestics* became part and parcel of the families with whom they had begun their service—and almost born in the house, they were at a good old age buried out of it. They grew up with the children, and were essential to every arrangement. Their advice was asked on all occasions, and masters who feared not God themselves, did homage to “the Gospel which bringeth salvation,” as at the same time the source of all moral worth, by the confidence they reposed in those who only sought to please man, by taking care to please God.

This class of females, however, most honourable and useful, though at no time very numerous, has of late nearly passed away, and it is rather a phenomenon when a Servant’s engagement exceeds a term; and it is quite a thing to be spoken of should it embrace a period of years.

For this evil and inauspicious change, the employer, beyond all doubt, is not less to blame than the employed; and the frivolous caprice of the one party is never to be quoted without distinct and emphatic reference to the callous heartlessness of the other. Yet are we, at the same time, persuaded, that if the

latter were only to cultivate the meekness, and diligence, and integrity, which were so conspicuously blended in the subject of this memoir, not a few of the former—haughty and unreasonable as they too often are—would speedily be “won by their conversation,” to what is holy as well as to what is gentle.

To *servants* of every class, we, therefore, especially dedicate the Memoir of Elizabeth Gow, entreating them to read it with openness, consideration, and prayer. A more artless and persuasive—a more definite and consistent model they need not desire, and will not easily select. And as there was nothing remarkable in the talents or education of this Hidden One, to account for her superiority, and which might repress the hope of imitation, let all who admire her walk, fix it thoroughly in their mind, that what *she* was, *they* too may become, if with her, they only consent “to seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,”—leaving all other things to be added, according to the wisdom of Him who ever loves us better than we love ourselves.

Should any be desirous of knowing the source from which the pages that follow have been derived, and the degree of credit that may be attached to them, it will be satisfactory to subjoin a statement furnished by the writer herself, and which is dated, 14th July, 1767.

“This narrative,” says Elizabeth Gow, “is a short and very imperfect account of the various dealings of God with my soul. One reason for its shortness and imperfection is, that I was but young when the Lord impressed my mind with a sense of Divine things, and I could not then write. But the chief and main reason is, that as I did not intend to record these at all, so I was not at so much pains to keep them in memory as I might have been.

“Two things besides I should mention which hindered me from recording these at the time. *First*, that I saw so much sin and wickedness in my heart, that I was afraid the Lord would be provoked to leave me to myself, and then I would have been a reproach to religion, and a stumbling-block to many. *And, Second*, I feared that I should multiply words without knowledge.

“But these impediments which lay in my way are now so far removed, that I cannot help mentioning some of the wonderful ways by which I have been led.

“O, that it may tend to the glory of God and the praise of His free grace! This is what I wish. Should these lines fall into the hands of any of my surviving friends, if they consider, on the one hand, how good and gracious the Lord has been to my soul, —and on the other, the vile and base return I have made Him for His love and mercy manifested in the way and manner of His dealing with me, surely it will

tend to exalt *Him* and debase *me*. ‘I think, through grace, this is my design.’ ”

If any one might count it a privilege to edit the Papers referred to in these sentences, and preserve a memorial of her whose experience they describe, it could not fail to be a labour peculiarly grateful to one who cannot doubt, that,—along with not a few very dear to him according to the flesh, some still in the vale, others long ago before the throne,—if a partaker of Elizabeth Gow’s faith and an heir of her hope, he is largely a debtor to her prayers.





CHAPTER I.

Elizabeth Gow is awakened to see that she is a sinner, and fears the wrath which is to come. “*Sin revived, and I died.*”

 N all likelihood, Elizabeth Gow was born towards the commencement of last century, at Kinclaven, in Perthshire, and in that neighbourhood her early days were spent. So poor were her parents that they could not afford to have their daughter taught writing,—but they feared the Lord, and nothing doubtful or forbidden did she witness under their humble roof.

Enjoying such advantages, the subject of this Memoir passed through childhood and youth without marked reproach. But her heart was notwithstanding a heart of stone, and, till she was fourteen, “God was not in all her thoughts.”

At this time the Spirit touched her soul, and it melted at His touch. Light shone where all had been darkness, and secrets were made known which had never been suspected hitherto. Hardness gave way to sensibility—sensibility ended in conviction,—

and conviction was the precursor of life. Previous to this moment, had you asked what was her estimate of herself, Elizabeth Gow would have told you, that she was even as a well-watered garden. But now she seems no better than a sepulchre full of rottenness and defilement. “Sin hath revived, and she dies.” Her own account, at once succinct and perspicuous, is as follows:—

“I shall, in the first place, give a few short hints of my life before the time when the Lord began to manifest Himself to me in a more special manner.

“I remember, when I was young, I was much given to play on the Lord’s day, and likewise to lie to conceal my faults. I did not use to curse or swear, for I was afraid my parents might hear me, and punish me; only I remember this—one of my father’s neighbours was much given to swearing, and I had such a love to that way of speaking, that I have gone to a secret place, and pronounced the word Devil a number of times over, and looked all the time, lest any person should see me. Thus the wickedness of my heart was great.

“Sometime after this I was much perplexed with the thought of death and fear of hell,—so much so, that if my head ached I thought I should presently die and go there, and that it would be my portion: this therefore put me in great disorder. I was also much distressed with dreadful apprehensions of God, for I was convinced I was a sinner, and therefore viewed God as

my enemy. I considered Him as the friend of His own people, but knowing myself to be none of them, this was no comfort to me.

“ In such seasons I would resolve to be very religious, but these resolutions were soon broken and forgot. At other times I was much afraid that the day of Judgment would soon come : and then, though in health, the fears of Hell would return. If I had been in the fields, and seen a black cloud, I thought the Great Day was to begin immediately ; yea, so full was I of the thoughts of that day, that I often dreamt that it was already come. I have thought that I saw the firmament in flames, and Christ coming in the clouds. Then I would weep and wish to be religious, and for a while would be very serious in my own way ; but in a short time these impressions wore off. Thus I continued for some time—I cannot absolutely say how long,—only I think it would be about three years ; after which the Lord took a more remarkable dealing with me in this manner.

“ Early in my *fourteenth* year,—on the 26th of January,—in the evening of this ever memorable day, —I was about some temporal business, and laying a great many schemes about many things which I should do after this ; but, in the midst of these thoughts, it was suggested to my mind, what if death should come before I got all these things accomplished ? Then have I thought how shall I meet death, when I have no interest in Christ : for I was convinced I was destitute

of this. My heart did then meditate terror, and my spirit was 'fearfully disquieted within me.' On former occasions of this nature, I used to read and pray much, and quiet my conscience, and so find relief. To these duties I again had recourse this night. I prayed with more fervour than ever I had done, but all was to no purpose. These could not pacify my distracted mind.

"At the usual time of night I went to bed, but the sleep I had was very unpleasant. On the morrow I was no better, for I saw myself an heir of hell and a child of wrath. I again had recourse to reading, prayer, and meditation, thinking it would make me better; but in the midst of these duties I was stopped; for I got such an humbling view of all my sins, original and actual, as put me in the greatest horror and confusion. I looked on original sin as an evil much to be lamented and bewailed, as it was in the heart the bitter spring of all my actual sins. It grieved me that sin had made me so vile in the sight of a pure and holy God. It was also a very bitter thought to me that I had offended that God so much, who had been so gracious to me; and when I thought of His love to sinners: and of that matchless Saviour who had been so often offered to me, and whom I had so often rejected; these thoughts cut me to the heart, and I loathed and abhorred myself on account of sin. I could then have fled anywhere from myself,—had it been possible.

"When I looked back on my sinful lifetime misspent,

—a Saviour rejected—His love and mercy despised,—the sight and sense of these things made me abase myself in dust and ashes. I then thought the brute creation were more happy than me, because they had not a soul to be lost: for I was persuaded that mine must certainly be so. I was then in the most deplorable case that any creature could be in that is not given over to utter despair. I was indeed almost without hope—only God enabled me still to continue in the practice of the duties above mentioned, and sometimes in such seasons, I thought God will yet be gracious. I did often retire alone and cry for mercy, but I was afraid it could never be granted me, and then my spirit was ready to fail.

“One morning, being in great distress, and weeping very bitterly, my mother overheard me, and inquiring the reason, I was not very willing to inform her, but she pressed me. I told her that thoughts of sin and fear of hell were very grievous to me. She then told me there was a gracious Mediator between God and man, if we would look to Him by faith. At first this gave me some relief, but that which cut down my hopes was that *I found I had no faith.* I believed indeed that Christ was able to save, but could not believe He was willing to save me. I thought that, had I been better and more religious, I could have trusted Him for salvation; but, seeing myself so vile and abominable, I could not think it possible. I then set to the work of reformation with much increasing earnestness.

I read and prayed more than ever—thinking this would recommend me to God. *Though young in years I was not so in pride, for I would not be saved by Christ alone, but wanted some righteousness of my own.*

“Blessed be God, the high tower of all my hopes was soon overthrown: for instead of growing better, I grew worse. I saw my whole soul polluted, and every duty I performed defiled, and not only insufficient to save me, but attended with so much sin and guilt as was sufficient ground for my condemnation. My heart was then ready to fail, and to say there was no hope: for I saw that nothing but the blood of Christ could deliver me from guilt which was so great, or cleanse me from such pollution. I now saw sin to be an evil and a bitter thing, and its consequences terrible. I would then have been glad to close with Christ upon any terms, be they what they would. This I attempted once and again, but could not believe that His Spirit assisted me in this great work; and so thought He closed not with me. Still I felt that I must either be interested in Christ, or perish eternally. I was weighed down, and often filled with horror, thinking I must certainly perish. Unbelief prevailed exceedingly. Most people think it easy at any time to believe, but if they once try it in earnest they will see they are sadly mistaken. I found it the most difficult thing in the world to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

“One thing besides, which added much to my

affliction and anguish, was, that I thought I had but a few days to live: yea, I feared lest every day would be my last. This threw me anew into great terror and confusion. When I viewed myself on the brink of eternity, none can comprehend what the workings of my mind were, except those who have themselves experienced similar feelings. I was now in deep waters,—life was a burden, and death a terror. Oh! how did I then congratulate the happiness of those who had an interest in Christ, and so were for ever safe! When I had sat down to meat, I have often thought what a sumptuous entertainment the coarsest fare would be to those who have a covenant right to common blessings: and I feared that this would never be my case."





CHAPTER II.

Elizabeth Gow finds peace through Jesus Christ, and the fruit is unto holiness. *“He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.”*

AFTER being awakened, Elizabeth Gow fell into the too common error of suspending her enjoyment of peace on the act of her faith, and sought for rest rather by being able to say, *I have believed*, than in simply knowing that *Jesus died*,—thus substituting an effort of her own mind in room of Emmanuel’s work. For she writes, “I felt that I must be interested in Christ; yet I could not believe that His Spirit assisted me, and so thought He closed not with me.” Soon, however, was she led to see that, instead of her faith being designed to create peace, it was only meant to recognise the peace which the Cross purchased and proclaimed; and though formerly she asked, “Shall I enter into rest because I have believed?” she was now able to infer, “I have entered into rest, therefore have I believed.”

“But, blessed be God! though my distress was great, it was not long continued. On the

Sabbath I went to the church.* Even this was far beyond my expectations, for in the midst of my fears I thought I would never be so happy as to be in it again, or hear again the offer of salvation. But, after all, I was like to come away in as miserable a condition as I went, for I heard nothing in the lecture or sermon that was any ground of comfort to me,—for though Christ was offered to sinners, yet this offer did not come within my reach; and I was now again ready to conclude that this precious gift of God should never be mine, and so was filled with sorrow, as all the service was now over except the singing of the psalms, and I had got no comfort. This was my state when a part of the 25th Psalm was sung, from the sixth to the tenth verse. On hearing these words, ‘the Lord is good and gracious,’ my heart was melted, for ‘*good and gracious*’ sounded so sweet to me, a guilty rebel,—it conveyed to me an idea of pardon. The words—

The meek and lowly He will guide
In judgment just alway :
To meek and poor afflicted ones
He'll clearly teach His way,

were sent to me with power.

“I came home, and as soon as possible retired alone, crying for grace to help me to believe,—for I saw myself condemned by a holy God, and that the

* The Church of Kinclaven, of which Mr. Scott was minister.

sentence could not be removed but by a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. I thought if I could only believe that the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer imputed to me would answer the demands of the broken law, all would be well. I spent some time in secret prayer, and was enabled to give myself to the Lord, and to receive Him as He is offered in the gospel for salvation. I received Him as my great Prophet to instruct and teach me in the way, for I saw myself blind and ignorant; and, above all, I resolved to come to Him as my great High Priest and Atonement, resting my eternal all on His complete sacrifice, believing that I should be justified freely, and saved completely by what He had done; and I also received Him as my King and Lord, to rule and reign over me and in me. I was also in some measure enabled to believe in God as my God and Father, and in the Holy Ghost as my sanctifier, instructor, and comforter. My soul was led out to view the adorable Trinity as interested in my behalf in the way of the new covenant, and to pray in sincerity that the image of God would be stamped on my soul. I attempted to resign myself wholly to Him, and have no will of my own, taking His word as the rule of my conduct, and looking to Jesus as the great propitiation, and casting my guilty soul on His care.

“My inward anguish now began to melt away; these terrifying apprehensions of the wrath of God,

which had before harassed me, were gone, and the hope of His favour and friendship came in their place. I attempted to say, as in Isaiah, 'O Lord, Thou wast angry with me, but Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.'

"During the past days the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in my distressed conscience; but, ever blessed be His name! He hath taken them away by His own gracious hand, and healed my wound by the precious blood of Christ; and, oh how wonderful and great the change! I was constrained to cry out, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me be stirred up to magnify and bless His holy name, for He hath magnified His mercy to me exceedingly.'"

Her bonds being loosed by a sight of Christ, as the Father's Well-Beloved dying for the guilty, Elizabeth Gow became a new creature in thought and feeling, in walk and life. For the effects which followed this important change in her views she thus records:

"(1.) My convictions of sin were much deepened. When I had seen the sun shine into the house, it put me in mind of what God had done for my soul; for in its shining it discovered many things wrong that were not seen before; so when a soul is savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God, it brings to view many secret and hidden sins which were not discovered before by an unenlightened mind. As I now saw myself a greater sinner, so I saw Christ a greater Saviour. (Job xlii. 5), 'Now mine eye seeth Thee.'

“(2.) Formerly I did not think myself so far from God ; and though I had some confused notion that I stood in need of a Saviour, yet I was wholly a stranger to the truth, that He only could deliver me from the power and punishment of sin, but now I was enabled to flee to Him for both. (Eph. ii. 13), ‘ Made nigh by the blood of Christ.’

“(3.) Another effect I would mention, was in the performing of duty. Formerly it was as a task to quiet my conscience, but now it was as the command of God ; and, because I found much sweetness in drawing nigh to God, I now looked on it as the highest privilege. Formerly, although I used to run the round of duties, I felt no pleasure in them. But now the case was far otherwise ; when I had got retired for prayer, reading, and meditation, I found a joy and sweetness far above all the empty pleasure of worldly enjoyment. To all those who know nothing of this by experience, I would only say, ‘ Come and taste ’ of these unmixed joys ; you will find that God is good above what tongue can express or heart conceive. I can truly say, that when I was alone, employed in these duties, they were the most precious moments of my life.

“ It is true I used to read much in my Bible before, but it was to gratify curiosity. Now those places which edified and quickened my soul were precious to me. The New Testament, the Psalms, the book of Isaiah, and the Song of Solomon, I found much sweetness in.

And oh, with what pleasure and joy did I then pour out my heart in prayer, when I could view God as my reconciled God in Christ, and cry Abba, Father ! Meditation was another means which I found pleasure and profit from ; for this reason I sat much alone, that I might think upon the work and word of God. (2 Cor. v. 14 ; Ps. cxix. 7-9 ; cxix. 105 ; Acts ix. 11) ‘ The love of Christ constraineth.’

“(4.) Another effect from this change was, I lost conceit of former companions : though they were still very dear to me, yet because they knew nothing of religion, I could find no pleasure in their company. There was, however, in our neighbourhood, one young woman in whom the power of divine grace was manifest, for she had no encouragement from relations, but all opposing her ; yet she continued faithful, wholly taken up with God and religion. In her company I took much delight, and we endeavoured to strengthen each other’s hands as much as we could. (2 Cor. vi. 17 ; Rom. xii 2), ‘ Come out from among them, and be separate.’

“(5.) I observed, that formerly sorrow for sin and godly joy could not be in my heart at one and the same time, but now, while I was grieved that I had so offended a good and gracious God, so wounded a dear and loving Redeemer, yet in the midst of this grief I could rejoice, hoping that my sins were forgiven, also hoping that the power of sin was broken in me by the Glorious Almighty Conqueror, and that in due time it

would be destroyed and rooted out of my heart. As I hoped that the graces of the divine Spirit were now implanted, so I rejoiced that they would come to perfection at last.

“ (6.) Lastly, death was formerly a great terror to me, but now the thoughts of it were pleasant and agreeable. ‘ For the which cause I also suffer these things : nevertheless I am not ashamed ; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day ’ (2 Tim. i. 12). ‘ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me ’ (Ps. xxiii. 4).

“ In this happy case I continued two years and two months, during which time, though the preaching of the gospel was sweet to me, yet the Duties above mentioned were chiefly seasons of refreshment, for in these God did more remarkably manifest Himself to my soul.”





CHAPTER III.

Elizabeth Gow having obtained rest in Jesus Christ through the Word, longs to drink deeper into His love at the Table of Communion. “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions!”

HAVING stepped down into “the Pool” of Redemption from “the Porch” of *Scripture*, and found healing for her soul, Elizabeth Gow soon felt anxious to descend into the same blessed waters, through “the Porch” of the *Communion Table*, in the hope that she might be baptized anew with the love of Christ. And what she desired was granted, though not till after some delay, fitted both to quicken and discover the change she had undergone.

At this time she was little more than *fourteen years of age*; and had to be * led to the table by Mr. Scott, the minister who presided. But to “know Christ,”—to “know Him” more fully and impressively, to

* As stated by her nephew, Mr. John Smith, an Independent Minister, at Blackhills, in the parish of Skene, near Aberdeen.

“know Him” in His life and heart,—to “know Him” as the very Saviour He is, was the longing with which her heart was ready to break, and she would not be stayed until “that which she had heard,” “her hands have handled of the Word of Life.”

“When I had been some months in this state of mind, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was to be dispensed, of which I was very desirous to be a partaker; but my parents said I was too young, and so would not consent to it. I thought had they known in what light I now received things, they would not have kept me from it; but this I kept secret, and I could not get to the Communion Table. (Acts ii. 42).

“The Lord continued to be gracious as formerly, so I went on in the practice of duties above described with joy and delight.

“But in my fifteenth year the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was again to be dispensed, and being still anxious to partake of it, I was much led out in prayer to God, both that He would prepare me for it, and also give me communion and fellowship with Himself when it came. When I told my parents I was so desirous, they said I was still too young; but I told them I would not stay back, for I saw it to be my duty. I viewed it to be such a positive command of Christ, that I could not neglect it. ‘*Do this in remembrance of Me,*’ says the Redeemer.

“ At this time I went to stay with an aunt ; she was a most religious woman, as most of the people were in the village where she lived. Among the rest, there were two girls, not much older than myself, who sometime before this had set their faces Zionwards, and turned their backs on the world. We went to the Sacrament together, and, as David says, ‘ *We took sweet counsel together as we went to the house of God.*’ I longed much to be at the Table of the Lord, for I had found much sweet communion with Him in other duties, and I expected more there.

“ On the Sabbath morning I found such earnest longings to get a view of Christ and His glory, as I cannot express. When I went to secret duties, I sung part of the 42nd Psalm, from the first verse—

‘ Like as the hart for water-brooks
In thirst doth pant and bray ;
So pants my longing soul, O God,
That come to *Thee* I may.’

“ And if my heart deceive me not, it was the very sentiment of my soul. When I went to the church, I was restless and uneasy, between hope and fear. The minister’s text was in John viii. 36, ‘ *If therefore the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed*’—and I will say of the Sermon it was refreshing, but it was not my communion. After the first table was served, they could not get the second filled ; few seemed willing to come forward, though the minister begged it of them

once and again. My two companions and I sat in a seat near the Tables ; the minister desired us to come forward. I went and sat down with fear and trembling. Just after I was sat down, these words from 1 Peter ii. 7, came into my mind with power, ‘ *Unto you who believe, He is precious,*’—and along with them I got a sweet view of the Lord Jesus in His glory and excellency, and a joy arising from the persuasion, that I had an interest in Him as *my* Saviour and Redeemer. All my fears were gone for a time. I do not remember perfectly what happened during the rest of this solemnity, only I recollect that a sense of these things remained on my spirit many days after.

“ My two companions and I began to speak often to one another of the truths of religion, and how sweet it had been to us. Upon the doing of which, these two effects followed : In *the first place*, by telling each other how good and gracious God was, and what we had found of it, our hearts were stirred up to love Him more and more, and all of us were more strengthened in the ways of God. The *second effect* was, that our hearts were knit together in love, so that we could not be separate. And in this the excellency of religion will appear superior to this world’s enjoyments, for when any have a large share of the latter, they do not like others to partake with them, lest their happiness should be impaired. But, on the contrary, those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have such a concern for the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, that

they rejoice the more, the greater the number that share of their happiness, knowing that there is enough in their Father's house for them all.

“ But to return. My companions and I finding so much delight in one another's company, and that we might have more communion with God, and with each other, concluded amongst ourselves, that it was our duty to join together in prayer and praise to God, and conversing more immediately about those things which concerned our souls ; and for this purpose we set apart some portion of one night in the week for these duties : and I think God was in the midst of us to bless us. And I am persuaded, that our communion was with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ ; so '*we went on our way rejoicing*,' for the Lord made us glad with the light of His countenance.

“ The Lord's Supper was again dispensed, when we were so happy as all to partake of it. The words which the minister chose for his text on the day of preparation, were these,—‘ *Unto you who believe, He is precious.*’ This passage being so sweet to me the first time I was at the Lord's table, it was most agreeable to hear it explained. What he chiefly insisted on was, the character of those who believe, and what it is in Christ that is precious to them. Blessed be God ! I hope I was found among the happy number, inasmuch as I remember this was the first sermon that was remarkably blessed to me. My whole soul was in a transport of joy, and continued so all next day, when

I heard a refreshing sermon from Philippians iii. 3, '*Rejoice in Christ Jesus.*' I went to the second Table, desiring to see the King in His beauty, and have communion with Him ; and, for ever blessed be His name, He granted my request, and I was confirmed of the greatness and preciousness of Christ, and my interest in Him. At the Communion Table, these words came with power to my mind, ' My beloved is mine, and His desire is towards me.' I could do nothing but wonder at the matchless love of Christ to me ; for these words brought a persuasion along with them, that I had an interest in the Lord Jesus as my Saviour and Redeemer. Then I went on my way rejoicing, for the joy of the Lord was my strength. *For the last six months, I lived a sort of heaven upon earth* ; for I had no opposition from the world, and what was more surprising, met with little from my own heart.

" At this time my sisters and two of my brothers were ill of a fever, so that I had to return home. It was a great grief to me to part with my companions,— who were dear to me as my own life. I found my sister dangerously ill, and I secretly wished to take the fever also, that I might die, and get to my heavenly Father's house, which seemed infinitely better than anything this world could offer. I found the whole bent of my soul going out after Christ, and longed for the full enjoyment of Him in heaven. I thought that the depravity of my heart, and the devices of the enemy

would never again assault me—that I was so renewed, that they were all rooted out.

“After I came home, my brothers and sisters recovered, and I did not take the fever. I found a great want in my sweet and useful companions; for, although my mother was an eminent Christian, yet I could not be so free with her. I likewise began to meet with opposition from my father, for though a good man, yet he thought I spent too much time in private. But in these duties I found so much delight, I could not live without them; so that all the obstacles I met with were more than compensated by the inward security I felt at these times. Oh, what cause have I to bless the Lord for His goodness to me, in every respect, especially for His dealings with me in these days, when I found such sweetness in the ways of religion. Who made me to differ from others? I had nothing in or about me to move Him to take notice of me in such a way of mercy and love; for, alas! after all that the Lord had done for me, I am a mass of sin and corruption; so that, on the one hand, while I thank and adore His holy name, I may blush and be confounded at the base returns I make to His wondrous grace, so richly manifested to me. How barren and unfruitful do I remain in the Lord’s vineyard; it is only because He is God, and not man, that I am not consumed; and let me, from my own experience, earnestly recommend *early* religion. *The time of youth is a precious time for the concerns of the*

soul, and if neglected, we will never find another like it. Then the mind is more easily impressed, and not so hard and insensible as in riper years, when we are employed in business, or harassed with cares, perplexities, and griefs."





CHAPTER IV.

Elizabeth Gow walketh in darkness for a little, and her feet are ready to slip. “*After I was turned, I repented—after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.*”

HOUGH our Hidden One had indeed left the pit, and planted her feet upon “the Rock,” she had still to contend both with “the plague of her own heart,” and “the fiery darts of Satan.” The stream flowed smoothly for no inconsiderable period—without ebb, or eddy—and one might have supposed that it would be the same to the end. But first there came a dark ripple over the surface of the water—and then all was gloom and night. The heart condemned—and she said, “There is no hope,” as if unforgiven and rejected.

“When I thus lived in my father’s house, the Lord began to bless, in a more lively way, the stated preaching of the gospel to my soul, so that I was nourished and fed by it.

“At this time also, I began to find *the strength of corruptions* within me; but I trusted they would be rooted out at last, and through the blood of Christ

I should overcome them; so that I did not despair of victory.

“All this time the devil lay asleep, so I thought he was vanquished and overthrown, and would never rise more; but I was sadly mistaken, for I soon began to be distressed about some of the peculiar doctrines of religion.

“Reading one morning in Acts, ‘As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed;’ presently it came into my mind, What if I am not ordained, and am only deceiving myself?—it will be better for me to know if I am elected, and then I shall be sure I believe. So strong was the temptation, that I thought it needless to attend to duty as formerly; for, if I was not chosen, it would be all to no purpose. This was the cause of much estrangement from God, for I could not go to Him with confidence as formerly. I did not neglect prayer, reading, or hearing the word, but they had now become a barren wilderness, and their sweetness was taken away. I was now in the most heartless case that could possibly be, so that religion became to me altogether a melancholy thing. In this distressed state I continued for the space of some months.

“There was one remarkable providence which happened to me at this time. I went to service, and being young, I got but a mean place; though that would have been but little, had they used me well. But my mistress took a sort of hatred to me. So, considering the

state of my mind, and ill usage from the world, it bore very hard upon me ; and as it was almost the first trial of a temporal kind I had met with, I did not know well how to bear it. I found I could not stay till the expiry of my engagement ; and this troubled me very much, thinking it might bring a reproach on religion : for the family I was settled with used to make a mock of Ministers of the gospel, and all those who had a profession of religion. I did not know what to do. *I would gladly have turned sick, but knew it was a sin to pray for distress.* I then resolved to have recourse to God in this time of perplexity. I had often found Him good to me in other respects, and I pled with Him, that in His providence He would remove me from this house, in any way that would not bring reproach on His holy name. He heard and answered my petitions : for soon after, my mistress told me she thought I told tales out of the house, which she did not like—she also said, if I was not pleased I was at liberty to go away. I was a little uneasy at this, for I did not like the name of *tale-bearer* ; however, I embraced the opportunity, and went back to my parents. My mother went and asked my mistress if she had anything to say of me ; she said, ‘ Nothing ; but that I was a tale-bearer.’

“ I had remained at home but a few hours, when a gentlewoman, whose servant had married at this time, knowing that my mistress had parted with me for no cause, sent and engaged me, and I stayed with her three years and six months. What of the Lord’s goodness

did I not see in this matter, in delivering me without any hurt to my character, and providing a family for me ; for had it not been past the term, they would not have taken me, for I was not a proper servant for so genteel a family. I also saw much of the Lord's loving-kindness towards me while there. I was but young and very inexperienced, *being only sixteen*, but He gave me favour in their eyes. There was nothing about me to cause this, so it must have been from the Lord, ' who is excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working.'

" After I had remained some time in this situation, my distress of mind returned, and I knew not what to do, still desiring that the Lord would shew me whether or not I was in the election of grace.

" After being brought very low, and finding no out-gate from my trouble, I being in the church one day, a stranger preached from these words, ' Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.' He spoke of many discouragements Christians meet with in their journey ; but he chiefly insisted on this, that the enemy might suggest they were not elected, and therefore could not be effectually called or saved, and from this would have them to give over the pursuit. He insisted largely on this point, and spoke the very thoughts of my heart. He then proved from Scripture, that this persuasion cometh not from Him that calleth us, but from the devil, who watcheth his opportunity, and ' goeth about seeking whom he may devour,' and should not be given heed to ; for he also proved from

Scripture that this was one of ‘the secret things belonging unto God,’ and that it was not our duty but our sin, to pry into it. He shewed that ‘we ought to give all diligence to make our calling’ sure, and then we should know ‘our election.’ This came home to my mind with such power, that I looked upon it as a direct message from God to me, and it proved effectual for restoring peace to my troubled mind. Thus the enemy was disappointed ; he thought to make me give up all for lost, and so sit down in despair, under the impression that I need not strive for heaven, it being impossible to get there if not elected. These thoughts were very grievous to me ; but by means of this sermon, God graciously assured me that I was in the right way.

“Another advantage I got at this time was, that I saw my case not so singular as I had imagined ; for the minister told us that this often discouraged the people of God, in their seeking after a crucified Saviour ; that it was of the devil, and should be rejected as provoking to a Holy, Sovereign God, who giveth no account of His matters further than necessary to His own glory and His people’s good. Hearing this, I was greatly comforted, being glad to know what was my duty in following out the appointed means ; and, from the description of the character of true seekers of the Lord Jesus, I was enabled to draw some consolation, seeing myself one of that happy number. Oh ! how did my soul now rejoice and triumph, and ‘sing

in the righteous way of God.' So, in the strength of divine grace, I was enabled to go on in my duty, and enjoyed great serenity for more than two years, and was led and nourished by public ordinances.

"I now began to discover the inbred corruptions of my heart in drawing me away from God and duty; but I found the grace that is in Christ Jesus sufficient for me, enabling me to press forward, earnestly aspiring after more conformity to the Redeemer. Though in this I made little progress, yet, blessed be God, I could not give up the pursuit.

"At this time I was much given to reading, and, amongst other books, I found Marshall on Sanctification. At first I was fond of it, but, before I was done, it caused me great uneasiness, for I must either condemn it or myself; for he asserted that assurance followed upon *the direct* act of faith, if it be strong, and not upon the following act. Now this was not my case; for, after I was enabled to close with Christ in a very clear and distinct manner, yet I was not so convinced of the reality of this change. Now this did not correspond with the sentiments of this book, for although I would not wish to see the fruits of a work of grace, as *the ground of justification*, yet I would desire to see them as the satisfying *evidence* of it. Nevertheless, Mr. Marshall's Treatise threw me into great perplexity, and I was at a loss to know what to think of my former assurance, and could only attempt through grace to flee to the Lord Jesus anew,

and close with Him by faith, so that I might find safety and comfort to my soul.

“These difficulties were not cleared up to me at this time, and I was in darkness for a season—only the Lord enabled me to lean upon His hand, still hoping and trusting in Him. Many a time indeed I was like to give up all for lost; for the old man of sin had now revived, so that I saw my enemies strong and many. Formerly ‘I could do all things through Christ strengthening me,’ but I feared He was departed from me, and I had no power to resist.

“My unbelieving heart was the bitter spring of my departure from God, and so led me on from evil to worse, and, if mercy had not prevented, would have landed me in perdition. I was persuaded that ‘one day I should fall by the hands of these mine enemies,’ seeing I had forsaken the Lord who would cast me off for ever (Psalm lxxxviii. 6). ‘Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit; in darkness—in the deeps’ (Psalm lxxvii. 1-12). I then resolved I would think of religion no more, for it was altogether in vain for me to think of it. Oh, the desperate wickedness of my heart ! for not only before but *after* I was enlightened by the Spirit, I had joined in the work of the devil to destroy my own soul. But adored be His holy name, He did not take me at my word, and leave me here. Oh ! that I could praise Him for His boundless grace manifested to me.

“One night while I was in great distress, having

resolved to seek the Lord no more, these words, from the Psalmist, came into my mind—

‘ The Lord Almighty and His strength,
With steadfast hearts seek ye ;
His blessed and His gracious face,
Seek ye continually.’

“ I cannot tell what delightful views I got of this Scripture at this time; but I then resolved to seek His face and favour more earnestly than ever I had done before; yea, *though I should not find Him, I determined not to give up the pursuit*, and, in dependence on His strength, I would go through all opposition.

“ After this conflict, I had a short respite. The Lord graciously shone on His own work in my soul, so that however vile and unworthy I saw myself to be, yet I was of the number of His children. I now rejoiced and was glad; for I thought all doubt and pain were gone. But I was not sufficiently watchful over the sins which lurked in my heart, and began to grow careless and secure; and not depending on my glorious Head and Captain for strength and assistance, my sins soon began to prevail against me. I continued in a heartless desponding state for some months.

“ In the month of December, one evening, while I was deplored my unhappy condition, my mistress desired me to make ready her bed, and she would wait on the child whom I usually kept. So taking

the child from me, she sat down by the fire; and fixing her eyes on it, she seemed to muse on something with pleasure. When I beheld her, I thought within myself it may be she is musing on some heavenly joy. I again thought the happy day once was when I could have done so too; but, alas! now I feel no such thing: I am surely in a very deplorable case. Presently the word came into my mind, 'It is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.' Again that other word came immediately after, 'For my people have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.'

"I was persuaded this was my very case; for I saw that I had sadly departed from God, and sought comfort where it was not to be found. I could not deny I had sought the face and favour of God above all other things, and even thought I had also chosen Him as the delight of my soul. But what cut me off here was—What if this seeking of God proceeded from common conviction, and the working of a natural conscience? This put me in great consternation. I do not think I slept any. *I once attempted to take a little food, but I could not.* When I walked in the street, I thought it would open and swallow me up; or when I went through any close, I thought the houses above would fall and crush me. And whereas formerly, when I was in anguish of spirit, I found relief in prayer, but now I seemed deprived of this

privilege, for I was so shut up I could not pray, neither could I find comfort in my Bible. I was as one distracted, and in this state continued some days, during which time I was distressed and ready to die through the agony of my mind. I slept none, and could not eat, or take comfort in anything. Yet I told my case to none, thinking it singular, and that none were ever in such a state before. One thing I thought a mercy, that I was enabled to carry it so fair that none of the family knew what was the matter, but thought that I was unwell."





CHAPTER V.

Elizabeth Gow holds fast the confidence on which she entered at the beginning, and the cloud breaks over her in rain.
“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto Thee—into Thine Holy Temple.”

Doubt and fear assailed this disciple, and “her moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” But doubt was to her no evidence of safety, nor did she reckon fear a privilege. Assured reconciliation to God was nothing without conscious nearness beside; and she had no rest until she found her soul once more sweetly nestling under the wing of the Most High.

“After all hope seemed gone, I felt a vehement desire to look once more into my Bible. Opening it at Luke xviii., I found these words:—‘Jesus spake a parable, saying, Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’ This I thought was a call to me, and I would attempt it; for who knows but God will yet be gracious? I went to prayer in much darkness and confusion at first, but soon the Lord of His infinite

mercy favoured me with liberty, and filled my mouth with arguments.

“For ever blessed be His holy name for this deliverance ! O for a heart to praise Him ! *I was transported with joy and delight that I had access again to the throne of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.* O the sweet and heavenly calm that was now in my mind ! I thought myself like a person who has newly escaped some imminent danger,—he rejoices exceedingly that he is safe ; but looking back upon his narrow escape, he trembles and shrinks at the awful thought, and so runs fast to get quite out of danger. Thus it was with me, for I thought I could not get a sure enough hold of Christ, that He might save me from eternal ruin ; so I endeavoured, through grace, this night to close with the Lord Jesus as my Prophet, Priest, and King ; and I really thought I got faith’s view of Him in all these respects ; so I praised the Lord, took some food, and at the usual time went to bed—slept sweetly, and was refreshed. How glad and joyful I was at the happy change I now felt ! My joy was so great, that it cannot be conceived of but by those who have tasted the like. Well might I now say that ‘ I was brought low, and He helped me,’ that when my feet were ready to slip into endless woe, He graciously held me up. O that ‘ I could praise Him for His great goodness,’ and for His wonderful works of love and mercy to my soul ! O for grace to love Him more and serve Him better than ever I have done !

“After this I enjoyed great calm; and though at times I was tempted and harassed with strong insinuations, that after all I was but a hypocrite, yet this could not keep me from secret prayer.

“It being near the close of the year, I resolved to set this time apart for the duty of self-examination, prayer, and praise to God for His wondrous love to unworthy me, these five years past. It was Sabbath, and I spent as much time as possible in secret duty; and, as the Lord was pleased to assist me, I entered into the state of my soul as in His sight. It was now night, and *I was in my favourite upper-room praying*, where, if my heart does not greatly deceive me, I enjoyed much nearness to, and sweet communion with, a Three-one God. This fills my soul with wonder and admiration to this very day, why ‘He ever set His love on me !’ Now I shall give a short hint of what happened at this time, as far as the Spirit of God shall bring it to my mind.

“Upon examining into the state of my soul, as in the light and presence of a heart-searching God, and as I thought under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit, I saw my interest in the Lord Jesus clear and certain. This filled me ‘with joy unspeakable.’

“Now, being in this delightful frame of spirit, it was impressed on my mind, in the strongest manner, that it was my duty to renew my covenant, or, in other words, to take a new hold of the new and well-ordered Covenant of Grace. And here I would remark, that I got a view

of the plan of redemption such as I never had before, in some respects ; for I was led out to see each of the Three Persons in the glorious Trinity, acting a part in that work. I saw the infinite wisdom of God the Father, *in contriving* this wonderful method for our recovery. I saw the unparalleled, stupendous love of the Son *undertaking and accomplishing* this grand work in the way and manner in which He did. I saw the condescension of the Holy Ghost in *applying* this salvation to the obstinate rebellious race of Adam, of whom there is none more so than myself. Now, receiving the glorious Trinity in these respects, I got by faith a clear and distinct view of God the Father, as *my* God and Father; the Lord Jesus Christ as the Mediator between an offended God and guilty sinners ; also, I got a view of the Lord Jesus Christ as *my* matchless Almighty Saviour. I got a view of the Holy Ghost as my guide, sanctifier, and comforter. In a word, I got a view of a Three-one God, as *my* portion in time and through eternity.

“ At this time, I was as firmly persuaded of the truth of these things, as if I had heard God the Father saying, ‘ I will be thy God,’—God the Son saying, ‘ I will be thy Saviour,’—God the Holy Ghost saying, ‘ I will be thy sanctifier, and instructor, and comforter.’ I now desired that my whole will might be swallowed up in the will of God. I resolved, in the strength of grace, I would be at His sovereign disposal, taking whatever He should see meet to send,

as from the hand of infinite wisdom, directed by infinite goodness and love. I resolved, through grace, that the devil, the world, and the flesh, should never get so much place in my heart as they had done, but that God should have the chief place there, and that I would be only and wholly for Him.

“This was indeed a time to be remembered, not only while I have a being, but through the endless ages of eternity. I think I can truly say my little upper room was to me this evening not only a Bethel, but a Peniel, where, by faith, I saw the glory of God in ‘the face’ of Jesus Christ. O unparalleled love!—the great, glorious, eternal Jehovah, thus to condescend, thus to stoop so low, as to manifest Himself in a way of love and mercy to unworthy me O grace ! grace ! glorious free grace !

“In this sweet and delightful frame of soul, I came from my room full of joy and consolation ; and the following days, instead of being days of fasting and mourning, were days of joy and feasting in a spiritual sense. ‘The joy of the Lord was my strength.’ The glorious sun of righteousness had arisen upon my benighted soul, with a sweet and divine healing, which refreshed and comforted me. It is now more than ten years since this night, and while I am writing down this faint account of it, it is sweet and savoury to my soul, like precious ointment poured forth. O wonderful free grace!—Sinners, come to this compassionate Saviour, and taste of His goodness,—He

never rejected any that came to Him laden with guilt, and covered with pollution !

“ At this time I got clearer views of Scripture than ever before : the promises came into my mind in number and sweetness, and ‘ the joy of the Lord was my strength.’ Ah, I vainly imagined that ‘ my warfare was accomplished,’ and that I should see war no more.

“ Walking one evening in spring by the side of the Tay, with my mistress’s child in my arms, the trees were beginning to blossom, and they appeared so beautiful, that they filled me with admiring thoughts of their Creator, and the wonderful variety of all His works. Suddenly my mind was taken off these, and fixed on a nobler work, the work of Redemption by the sufferings of the Son of God. What are we delivered from, and advanced to ? from heirs of Hell, to heirs of Glory ! When I considered *how* all this was accomplished, I got such a view of the glorious attributes of God, that I was like to forget where I was. Every thing seemed now sweet and pleasant, and I said in my prosperity, ‘ I shall not be moved ;’ so I grew careless and secure, while the enemy improved this opportunity, and lulled me fast asleep. Having enjoyed so long the delightful ground of sensible manifestations, I sat down to amuse myself with the beauty of the place, but forgot I was surrounded with enemies on all hands, and a treacherous heart within, ready to betray me, having a love to

carnal ease, and an aversion to activity in the Divine life. Had I attended to these, and cleaved more closely to Christ, relying more on Him, and less on myself, it would not have fared so hard with me as it did."





CHAPTER VI.

Elizabeth Gow allows her first love to cool, and her steps are for a time uneven. But the prey is taken from the mighty.
“Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had dwelt in silence.”

HROM her youth up, our Hidden One had walked without reproach in the sight of man; and still no lip ventured to charge her with what was wicked or unworthy. But her own heart condemned, whilst friends and neighbours were applauding,—and she, whom many despised as a saint, mourned over herself in bitterness of spirit as a backslider. Judging herself in the light of grace, as well as by the demands of holiness, Elizabeth Gow saw and avowed that her feet had too often slipped, and that with her hand upon the plough, she had allowed her heart to linger much in the world; for she writes, “I shall now give a few hints of the beginning and progress of my awful backsliding.”

“(1.) I began to think that sin was now so weakened, I need not be so watchful against its motions; likewise, that so much secret prayer was unnecessary. To these

suggestions my carnal heart gave way. The Spirit of the Lord had departed from me, but I perceived it not; so I went on from evil to worse, growing careless, forgetful of God and Divine things, yet still thinking myself safe. I wanted to serve God and mammon at the same time.

“(2.) Being in the country with the child committed to my care, I could not get to church: but this gave me little pain—I could stay at home and read a sermon, which quite satisfied me. I stayed two months there: my mind was filled with folly and vanity, and in a great measure I forgot God, who had been my Redeemer. Sometimes conscience would check me for being so careless, but that was soon overcome; and, being naturally of a cheerful temper, I was esteemed by my unthinking acquaintance an excellent companion. It is often the case, that what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of a holy God.

“(3.) I again returned to my native place pleased with myself, and every one professing great regard for me, which puffed me up exceedingly, and made me think a person may be religious, and have the favour of the world at the same time. Oh, for ever adored be the name of the Holy God, who did not say of me as of Ephraim of old, ‘She is joined to her idols, let her alone;’—‘My Spirit shall no more strive with her.’—Oh for a heart to praise Him who did not speak this concerning me!

“(4.) About this time the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was to be dispensed at Forgandenny,* where my mistress gave me liberty to attend: but I was in such a case with darkness, insensibility, the upbraiding of my guilty mind, and the darts of the accusing enemy, that I feared to venture. Only I thought I might hear the sermon, but not partake of an ordinance which was only for the friends of the Lord Jesus. I went out on the Sabbath morning in great distress. At the fifth Table Service, I rose to leave the church, but the crowd was so great, and my natural strength almost gone, I was carried back and seated at the end of the Communion Table ere I considered where I was. At first I was greatly puzzled what to do; for although I had got a token from the minister, I did not think I could venture forward; but when I thought of coming away, these words came to my mind with power, ‘O taste and see that God is good.’ My mind was calmed, and ‘He made all His goodness to pass before me.’ I was filled with wonder at this incomparable instance of His compassion and love, and was enabled to spend the rest of the day in a calm, delightful frame of mind. In the evening Mr. Bonar† preached from these words, ‘If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;’

* Mr. John Glen was ordained minister of Forgandenny in 1741, and served his Master with great fidelity till 1792, when he died in his eighty-fourth year.

† The Rev. John Bonar, Minister of Cockpen, from 1746 to 1756; and afterwards, at Perth, from 1756 to 1761.

and on the morrow, he preached from that text, 'My presence shall go with thee.' These sermons were remarkably blessed to me, as most of his sermons were. I came home glad in heart, and for a time continued to walk in the light of his countenance. But looking to my frames more than to the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and listening to the suggestions of a treacherous and unbelieving heart, my hopes were sunk, and my joy and delight in God were again abated.

"(5.) These things were to me the beginning of sorrows. I began to be grievously disquieted with thoughts of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and the sixth chapter of the Hebrews seemed so clearly to point out my very character and experience, that my heart could only meditate terror, and my spirit was overwhelmed within me. I was also sore assaulted with this, that none of the promises made to me had ever been accomplished. Not that I doubted the truth of the promises, for I believed them to be words of the living and true God, and more stable than the heaven or earth ; but I thought they did not belong to me. I called to mind the former blessedness of my soul—the happy periods when the whole bent of my mind seemed to be towards God and divine things ; but I now saw carnality, and pride, and unbelief, so strong and powerful, that I could not believe it possible it could ever be subdued. Yea, so strong and powerful was the enmity of my deceitful heart, that it would sometimes rise even against the holiness and spirituality

of the Divine Law, so that I wished it had not been so strict. This heart-rising was a terror to me, and confirmed my opinion of myself that I was only a hypocrite.

“I once thought of telling my case to some experienced Christian, or minister, to give me counsel ; but I concluded it better to bear my burden alone, *as my case must surely be singular*. In this I did wrong, for I grew so desponding that life was bitter to me ; and the enemy improved this opportunity of suggesting to my despairing mind that there was *a way* whereby I might find an outgate from all this misery. But, adored be His holy name, who preserved me in this hour of temptation, although most subtile and various were the arguments which the enemy used : one of which, amongst many, was, that my anguish of mind would justify the rashness of the action. *Oh ! what would become of a poor tempted soul unless everlasting arms were underneath to support and deliver it !* In this dismal state I remained for a time. The preached gospel was now no glad tidings to me, nor could I find comfort in the Bible : secret prayer was a great difficulty to me, yet I *sometimes* found liberty to pour out my griefs and tears to the Lord.

“Being in company one day with a Christian friend, she told me she had once been in great distress of mind, but she went to her minister—Mr. Bonar—and he was made the means, in the Lord’s hand, of clearing up her doubts. I told her nothing of my

own case, but resolved I would open my mind to Mr. Bonar, and ask his counsel; but upon this I was strongly assaulted, thinking it would only deceive him as well as myself, so I fell from this resolution, and went on in the bitterness of my soul.

“About this time, hearing Mr. Black,* in the High Church, discourse from the lukewarm state of the Church of Laodicea, this was to me an alarming message, and struck to my very heart. The devil again began to pour in his awful suggestions; but eternal thanks to the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah,’ who held me up and preserved me from falling a prey to temptation. Sometimes a ray of hope would dart into my mind, ‘Who can tell but God may yet be gracious,’ and glorify Himself in me? This, though not discerned at the time, I can now clearly see to have been the hand of God interposed to save me from the rage of my cruel enemy.

“Though I was often brought low, and ready to sink, and was often tempted to give up ordinances, thinking they helped forward my affliction, yet I was mercifully kept from complying with these snares.

* The reference is to Mr. David Black, who was ordained minister of Perth in 1737. The father of Mr. David was Mr. Thomas Black, who was minister at Perth also: chosen Professor of Divinity at St. Andrew’s, though not translated; and, in 1721, made Moderator of the General Assembly. A grandson of Mr. Thomas, and a son of Mr. David, Mr. David Black, was minister at St. Madoes in 1785, and called in 1794, to Lady Yester’s Church, Edinburgh.

One Sabbath I went to the church in heaviness of mind, and my spirit sinking within me; but the Lord sent a message by the hand of His faithful servant. Mr. Bonar preached from these words, ‘O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ and, thank God, through Christ Jesus our Lord, this was a remarkable sermon to me, for it was an exact description of the Lord’s work in my soul from the time He had taken a dealing with me to the present moment. Had I told my case to any one, I might have thought they had told Mr. Bonar; but as none but God knew it, I could not but take it as from the Lord. This filled me with wonder and sweet surprise, that any word of comfort should be sent to me. He told us these words were the exercises of a good Christian, and not of a hypocrite. This was news to me, and I came home comforted, thinking my captive soul was now set at liberty.

“ But the enemy soon renewed his assault, and threw me into great consternation. I again resolved to tell my case to my minister. I spent a very gloomy night, and when morning came I knew not what to do ; for I found a great difficulty in opening my mind to a stranger, being accustomed to keep everything so close within my own breast. But ‘a wounded spirit who can bear?’—so, laying every hindrance aside, I went to Mr. Bonar’s house, and found him the most humble, condescending man I ever conversed with. This gave me some courage, and as

soon as he knew my errand, he desired me to tell him my case freely. I told him that the sermon he preached yesterday was an exact description of my case, and of my past experience, and that, from some things he mentioned, I was fully persuaded the sermon was sent to me from God. After conversing some time with much faithfulness, he said he would venture to say that I had built on 'the Rock of Ages,' and that this dark and gloomy dispensation would turn for His glory and my greater establishment and comfort. These words were greatly prized by me, as I judged him both able and faithful to discern and direct me; so I came home calm and serene, extolling the Lord for His marvellous loving-kindness to my distressed soul. Oh, what a change was here! I passed the night in peace, and awaked to magnify and bless His holy name.

"Now I thought I was out of the reach of my grand enemy; *but I had not yet learned the blessed art of coming out of myself and resting on the righteousness of Christ, and on Him alone.* So ignorant was I that I was as a beast before omniscient power. I may well stand astonished that He did not consume me in a moment for my perverse rebellion. 'Who is a God like unto our God, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage.'

"On the morrow the enemy again began to throw his fiery darts at me, by suggesting that Mr. Bonar had

mistaken my case; that he could not discern my heart, and so might be deceived as well as myself; for that the common operations of the Spirit being often like a saving change, he might not be able to discern between the one and the other. Several scriptures came into my mind which seemed to confirm it, Deuteronomy xxxii. 22; Psalm xcv. 8; and these awful threatenings in 2 Thessalonians ii. 11, 'that God would send them strong delusion to believe a lie.' Thus the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me. I could join the Psalmist in saying,

‘Sore pained within me is my heart,
Death’s terrors on me fall;
On me comes trembling, fear, and dread,
O’erwhelming me withal.’

“I was sitting alone one day lamenting my case, yet thought nothing too hard for God, when these sweet words came into my mind, ‘I will be as the dew unto Israel’—immediately followed, ‘the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, and take the water of life freely.’ *I did not wait to dispute my right to the promise, as at other times, but eagerly grasped at the proclamation.* Oh, how refreshing to me was this offer ! I saw in these waters a cleansing, purifying virtue, to wash from the foulest crime,—to deliver from the guilt and power of sin ; how astonishing it seemed that I should yet have these inestimable blessings in my offer !

“After meditating, I went to prayer, and endeavoured to act faith in the Lord Jesus. I think I was never more in earnest in closing with Christ than at this very time. Every power and faculty of my soul with one consent went out after Him. This was a time to be remembered,—love without a parallel, and grace without a bound,—my captivity was turned away,—I was like one that dreamed.”

“At this time I was very weak in body, so that I could hardly keep out of bed; but means being used, I recovered; and next day, Sabbath, Mr. Bonar preached, and I found much nourishment in the word being suited to my need. On Tuesday evening I went and spoke with him. His counsel and advice were blessed to my soul; he bade me consider what the Psalmist said in Psalm xxvii. 13, ‘I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;’ and, from his own experience, he exhorted others to wait on the Lord. These words encouraged me.—I longed for Sabbath, when the Lord’s Supper was to be dispensed. Mr. Black preached from John xix. 30, ‘It is finished.’ *It was to me good news indeed, to hear of a finished work for one who could do nothing.* I longed to get to the table, that I might manifest His name before men and angels; and here He made known to me His wondrous love, so that I could do nothing but praise Him.”



CHAPTER VII.

Elizabeth Gow grows in holiness and peace, fed by ordinances, and quickened by trials. “*He giveth more grace.*”



HOUGH tried in various ways, and sometimes faint in spirit, Elizabeth Gow suffered not the cares of this life either to quench her joy, or tarnish her profession. “Continuing instant in prayer”—she left all her burdens with God. Delighting in the Word, it was sweeter to her taste than honey dropping from the rock. Faithful to the Sanctuary and the Table, her cruse of oil never failed. Not afraid to consult with the ministers of Christ, often was their counsel in private more blessed to her soul than their message from the pulpit. Our Hidden One was weak, “but kept by the power of God.” Already she had gotten much out of the Divine fulness—but the promise was made good to her, “whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” At times her cry came up from “the depths,” as if her hope were gone—but in the end it was true of her as of all

“the righteous, they shall hold on their way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.”

“About this time there was a passage which was much in my thoughts, ‘Verily, beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened you.’ Thinking what this might be, I was afraid of these depths of distress which so nigh swallowed me up. Upon that I tried to keep close to Christ, and cry to Him to save me from the hour of darkness. I trusted in Him, and was left in peace; and in a short time I was made to feel what this trial was,—it was that of bitter reproaches on account of religion; and what made it more sharp, it came from those whom I would not expect it from, and I feared lest Christ’s cause should be dishonoured by me. This gave me many errands to a throne of grace, and I found Him indeed a God that ‘heareth prayer.’

“Not long after this I was in the dark in some temporal matter. Again I had recourse to prayer, earnestly pleading for direction. I got some light on the path of duty by a sermon of Mr. Bonar’s. It was confirming and encouraging me to wait on the Lord for counsel in my present difficulty, which was about removing from the family where I had been for three years and a half. I was loath to go from a house where the kind providence of God had been so remarkably seen in bringing me into it, and where I had enjoyed so many precious seasons of sweet

fellowship and communion with God ; yet there were circumstances which seemed to make it necessary that I should change.

“At this time I was sweetly feasted every Sabbath by the gospel, and found equal satisfaction in secret prayer, reading, and meditation.

“On the second Sabbath of May the Lord’s Supper was dispensed. On the Fast-day Mr. Bonar preached from these words, ‘Return, O backsliding children.’ I was made to loathe and abhor myself before the Lord, and urged to betake myself to the blood of sprinkling. The sermon on Sabbath forenoon was from that passage, ‘Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.’ I went to the second table, but came away disappointed. The sermon on Monday preached reproof to me ; for *I saw I had been putting my frames in the room of Christ*, and trusting too much in the ordinance, thus limiting the Holy One of Israel.

“In a few days after this I went to another family. The Lord was kind in providing me with a serious master and mistress. Some time after, the Lord’s Supper was dispensed at Orwell,* where I had leave

* Orwell is a parish in the vicinity of Kinross, of which the Rev. John Spence was at this time (1752) minister. Mr. Spence joined with Mr. Gillespie, in resisting an intrusion at Inverkeithing, and was suspended for thirteen years from the exercise of all judicial functions, except in the kirk session.

to go. On the Saturday I walked there alone, it being ten miles distant. I had a delightful journey, for I got some sweet soul-refreshing views of the well-ordered covenant. I stayed in a Christian friend's house, which proved to me a Bethel, a house of prayer that night.

“Monday evening I returned home, rejoicing in God as my portion. But alas! this continued but a short time. The Spirit of the Lord seemed departed from me, and the effect was, that unbelief prevailed exceedingly. Also temporal things went ill with me. I spent my time in vanity and vexation of spirit,—every thought of my heart was evil. How astonishing the Lord's goodness, that He did not consume me in a moment because of my murmurings!

“In the month of November, the Sacrament was dispensed in Perth. This was a delightsome season to me. Being favoured with nearness to God in secret prayer, and at the Communion Table these words came frequently into my mind, ‘Thine eye shall see the king in his beauty.’ My soul was drawn out in wonder, love, and praise. In the evening Mr. Bonar was on these words, ‘I am the God of Bethel.’ He spoke of the times and seasons when the Lord reveals Himself. He seemed to know all that passed through my heart. I cannot describe how much refreshed and strengthened I was with this sermon. In family worship the Lord was present, and I also got nearness to God in secret prayer. As for temporal matters,

I met with much trouble and disappointment on every side; but this I minded little, while I enjoyed the light of my heavenly Father's countenance.

"About the end of this month of December,* 1752, I was much distressed about the state of the Church; a number of ministers preached not the Gospel in its purity and simplicity,—not setting forth the Lord Jesus as the only ground of our acceptance with God. Others, who preached the Gospel in more purity, contradicted it in their lives. And the Lord's faithful servants did rather bewail this in secret than openly testify against these things. This made me to fear that the Lord would be provoked to remove our candlestick out of its place, and leave us as a barren wilderness. But one night I was comforted by these words coming to my mind when I was wrestling for a blessing: *Isaiah xxvii. 2, 'In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.'* From this view of the Church I saw it to be safe, having the promise of God's protection in the darkest night as in the brightest day, so that her enemies shall not prevail against her.

"I began to long much for the time of Communion coming round, and for some days was filled with such

* It was shortly before this that Gillespie of Carnock had been deposed, and a new impulse given to Moderatism under Principal Robertson.

intense desires after nearness to Christ that I might be said to be in the case of the spouse, Canticles ii. 5, 'sick of love.' The Rev. Mr. Glen preached from Matthew v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' This sermon refreshed me greatly, so that my whole soul panted after God. This was indeed a time to be remembered, for I found every duty, public, private, and secret, as the very gate of heaven during this solemnity—so that when the night was far spent, and I had gone to bed, I could not sleep, but was refreshed in meditating, and rose to prayer.

"On Sabbath morning Mr Bonar preached from 'Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.' I felt every word; my rocky heart was melted down under these cheering rays of the sun of righteousness. When seated at the Table, these ever-memorable words were sweetly brought to my mind:—'Thou shalt be called by a new name; thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.' Oh how amazing did these words appear to me! Although I could not doubt them, I said within myself, How can these things be? But I was made to see them as coming to me through the Lord Jesus. I also got a view of my own unworthiness, and was made to abhor myself before the Lord, and filled with wonder that He should take such notice of me, an unworthy sinner. *Oh! how joyful would I have been to be absent from the body, that I might be*

present with the Lord, and to have been able to serve Him in another manner than I did here. I revolved all this goodness, redeeming love, and unmerited grace of God, and was content to be nothing, that Christ might be all in all.

“Soon after this I was threatened with fever, which caused me joy that I could scarce conceal, having ‘a desire to depart and be with Christ.’ But, getting better, I feared I must still live in a world of sin and sorrow, having a heart so prone to depart from God: but in this I sinned, for there was too much of self-seeking, and a fear of suffering as much as of sinning. Finding myself better I went to the church. Mr. Black preached from some verses of the 12th chapter of 2d Corinthians, where, blessed be God, many things were sent me for comfort and caution. In the afternoon, I heard a sermon from Revelation xv. 3, ‘The song of Moses and the Lamb.’ I felt this sweetly refreshing to my enraptured soul; for therein I found many delightful themes that would furnish me with notes of praise through eternity.

“The Sacrament was dispensed in November again, but the Lord saw meet to withdraw His comforting presence from me till the evening, when Mr. Bonar preached from these words:—‘Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him’ (1 Sam. i. 17). He observed that it was very possible some of the children of God had been pleading for the light of His countenance to be

lifted up on them at this solemnity, but may have been disappointed ; he desired we might inquire if there was not a cause, and commanded us to continue steadfastly in the path of duty and the diligent attendance upon ordinances.

“In the month of December, the Lord’s Supper was to be dispensed at Dunfermline. I was very desirous to go there, but at that season of the year, and more than twenty miles’ distance, I was afraid to venture, but prayed for direction and counsel from the Lord; and He was graciously pleased to give it, and clear my way, both from His Word and His providence, that I thought I could surmount all difficulty. When the time came for setting out it came on a storm of snow : this did not discourage me,—I still continued praying. When I could not retire alone, I sent up ejaculatory requests, and to these I have often found a speedy answer, and thus have known in some measure what it is to ‘be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ I would speak this to the praise of our heavenly Father, who hath established such a beauty and order amongst all His works, that religion, when right placed and prudently conducted, does not hinder our lawful employments. As servants and poor people must attend to these, it would be a hard matter did they never enjoy God but in their closets.

“But to return to my journey. The more I prayed I was the more confirmed that it was my duty to go.

A few persons who knew my intention began to tell me on the Thursday evening that I would be disappointed of my expectation if a miracle were not wrought ; but I told them I had no fears of being disappointed. Mr. and Mrs. Bonar did not dissuade me from going, but did all in their power to make my journey easy ; indeed, both of them ever acted to me as tender-hearted parents.

“ I set out on foot on the Friday morning. I had only one companion, but our journey seemed short, for, both in going and returning, our discourses were about the wonders of redeeming love, and our hearts burned within us. On the Saturday, Mr. Gillespie* preached from these words :—‘Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong’ (Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4). After sermon, I enjoyed nearness to God in meditation and prayer. On Sabbath, Mr. Gillespie discoursed from the 27th Psalm, ‘Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me : therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; yea,

* The Rev. Thomas Gillespie, Minister of Carnock, having been deposed in 1752, by the General Assembly, for declining to be present at a forced settlement in Inverkeithing, opened a church in Dunfermline, and was the founder of the Relief Body. He laboured for five years without any assistance from brethren, and, during that period, dispensed the Lord’s Supper thirteen times,—preaching, on each occasion, nine sermons, besides serving all the Tables. He was a meek and lowly man—a useful and painstaking minister.

I will sing praise.' This was encouraging to me ; for, notwithstanding all the numerous instances I have had of His love and care, I was often ready to faint at the prospect of my combined foes and unbelief. This day my mind was kept in peace, with little interruption, only at times I was carried away with wandering thoughts. However, I rejoiced in the prospect that, in a little time, my head would 'be lifted up above' these, and every sinful separating idol. I found much sweetness in secret prayer, for which I have good ground to praise and extol His blessed name.

"Mr. Gillespie, on Monday, closed the work, from Luke xii. 35, 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.' This discourse conveyed to me much instruction and reproof for my former unwatchfulness. How often have I felt the sad consequences of sloth! 'Lord, teach me to watch and pray.'

"At this time Mr. Gillespie had no assistant, yet we could not help remarking that he seemed stronger and more vigorous than at other times—an evidence that the Lord was with him.

"I came home from this ordinance refreshed, and with a foretaste of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand. But, like His people of old, I soon forgot His mighty work, and began my old course of unbelief and desponding. God's dealings with me

are a mystery of love and glorious grace ; and my ways are a mystery of rebellion and iniquity against Him. Sometimes I went on my way rejoicing ; but the enemy envied my situation, and tempted me to spiritual pride, telling me how highly favoured I was,—that scarce any of the Lord's children enjoyed such manifestations. These temptations I endeavoured to repel, but was overcome more than I was aware of. This bore hard on me, and sent me often to a throne of grace.

“ Providence afforded me an opportunity, on the 26th of January, to keep that day as a day of Fasting and Prayer. To this I had a loud call from the low state of religion in general and the power of indwelling sin in particular. The Lord was very gracious, and allowed me to tell Him all my complaints, and enabled me to trust that He would take every root of bitterness out of my heart, and, through the blood of the Lamb, I should be more than conqueror. I went to Mr. Bonar with all my difficulties. His advice was to beware of spiritual pride, for it was most dangerous, and the enemy would do all he could to draw me into this God provoking sin.”





CHAPTER VIII.

Elizabeth Gow has her wishes with respect to this life realized; but her pleasant hopes are suddenly scattered. “*Lord, by Thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.*”

GLIZABETH GOW’S most ardent wish was gratified, when she became a servant in the family and an inmate in the house of the minister whom God had made so useful to her soul.

“About this time,” accordingly, she writes,—“I was often employed in working in Mr. Bonar’s house; and as the servant that attended the child was going to be married, I often thought of getting her place. Mr. Bonar had so frequently been made an instrument of good to my soul, and Mrs. Bonar being so eminent a Christian, might be the means of stirring me up to more diligence in the divine life. But I did not think it prudent to tell my desire to Mrs. Bonar at this time, and so left it with the Lord, to bring it about if He saw meet: my mind was resigned to His will. Several offered for the place, but none suited,

so Mrs. Bonar engaged me, for which I thanked and praised my God for all His goodness toward one so unworthy, but I said nothing regarding this matter. I can bear testimony that I have ever found it good to acknowledge the Lord in all my ways ; and I can now declare that not one thing hath failed of His promises.

“ At this time I went to Kinkell,* where I was taken ill with a fever, which seemed dangerous. The worthy minister with whom I stayed faithfully told me so, and inquired if I was willing to die. I told him some of my past experience, but at this time I could not see my evidences clear. He observed, ‘ It was a bad time to read our evidences when the light was out.’ He said much to calm and comfort my mind, and the Lord blessed it for that end. My distress was removed and bodily health in some measure restored ; so that I returned to Perth, and went home to Mr. Bonar’s family. Oh how kind was the Lord to me in placing me amongst His own dear children when my health was so inconstant ! How many are there who are harshly treated when they are ailing ! This was not my case, for Mr. and Mrs. Bonar did all in their power for the welfare of my body and the comfort of my soul. Oh that I could praise the Lord for all His goodness to me !

“ The Sacrament in November (1761) was to me a precious season. In the evening Mr. Bonar preached from 2 Tim. i. 12, ‘ For I know whom I have believed,

* A small village not far from Crieff.

and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' The sermon was to me a source of strong consolation. And, on Monday, Mr. Scott * was on these words, in John xiv., 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' It appeared that my worthy master had fared well at this time, for I never saw him so cheerful. In the evening, Mr. Kemp, † minister of Gask, was with him, and the Spirit seemed truly to be poured out on both of them; yea, all the family seemed to share in the influences of divine grace. I was so happy, that I wrote to a Christian friend concerning both the spiritual and temporal comfort I enjoyed. But, alas ! I little knew what was coming.

"Immediately after this, one of the children was taken ill with a dangerous fever. However, it pleased the Lord to recover him. This was a great mercy, for he was one in whom the image of the blessed Jesus early appeared, and seemed to brighten as he advanced in life.‡ Soon after his recovery, I was seized with the same fever, which continued long,

* The Rev. James Scott, at that time minister of Kinfuans, and afterwards one of the ministers of Perth. He published, in 1810, "History of the Lives of the Protestant Reformers in Scotland."

† The Rev. David Kemp, father of the Rev. John Kemp, one of the ministers of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, and Secretary to "the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge."

‡ The Rev. Archibald Bonar, minister at Cramond.

and was very severe. While under it, I had many ups and downs. When my views were clear, my thoughts of death were sweet and pleasant; but when they clouded, oh how dark and gloomy did the valley then appear."

It seemed as if our Hidden One would now walk in comfort all her days, having come beneath the roof of a godly Minister. But the worm was approaching her gourd, and the shadow of death soon fell upon her path. In the prime of his life, and amid abounding usefulness, Mr. Bonar was suddenly removed from the vineyard, and he who on earth was indeed a burning and a shining light rose as "a star on the firmament of heaven;" as Elizabeth Gow has recorded. For she writes :—

"The first Sabbath after I was taken ill, my dear master was very unwell, though this did not prevent his preaching. The text was from Hebrews xii. 22, 23, 'But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' Those who heard the sermon said it was a most extraordinary one,—nor were they surprised at this, when a few days discovered that he was about to be soon joined to that general assembly and church of the first-born.

"After this sermon, however, he took to bed, and

the fever appeared.* In the space of a week he was recalled from the vineyard below to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; a blessed exchange for him, but afflicting indeed for us!—a dismal stroke on our dark land, to be deprived of such a burning and shining light!—an awful breach on the Church, to lose such an able and faithful guide of the flock of Christ!—who being sweetly influenced by the spirit of his Lord and Master, was well fitted to counsel the ignorant and comfort the afflicted. He was a warm friend to the poor, the fatherless, and the widow; and, after the example of his blessed Lord, he was unwearied in doing good to the souls and bodies of men; more useful and benevolent than I can describe,—yet he was taken away in the vigour of life, and midst of usefulness.”

At the time when this event took place, Elizabeth Gow was herself under the fever which carried off her Master, and on this account she touches more slightly on the circumstances connected with his last illness and death than might have been expected. His eldest son John,† however, though at the time but a youth, noted most of the particulars in a diary which he was in the habit of keeping; and as his entry is

* Fever was at the time epidemic in Perth and the neighbourhood, and it was understood that Mr. Bonar caught infection when attending Mr. Richardson of Pitfour.

† Afterwards in the high position of first Solicitor at Law in the Board of Excise, his brother James being the second.

alike artless and touching, whilst it supplies a blank in the journal of Elizabeth Gow, we venture to subjoin it.

“Upon Sunday, 13th December, 1761, during the time of his lecture in the New Church of Perth, my father was seized with a coldness and shivering, which he took little notice of: and preached again in the afternoon his last sermon on Hebrews xii. 22, 23, 24, singing after it Ps. cxxii. I was somehow inspired to go to the New Church and hear that last sermon, which made an impression on many present. On the Monday and Tuesday he kept not his bed but complained much. On the Tuesday night, he grew worse, and continued so ever after, in a high fever, seldom sensible, roving, and in great pain. Notwithstanding of all this, hopes were sanguine—though from the first I feared, and often wept in secret my loss so soon to have. His last advice to me was on the Thursday, to mind my mother and my God. Oh, can I ever forget it? On Sunday, betwixt sermons, he spoke to Mr. Black pretty sensibly, telling him he knew whom he had believed, and that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him until the day of the Lord. He turned weaker and weaker thereafter, and notwithstanding much solicitation, Dr. Tait would not apply a blister. Yet why do I reflect? All was foreordained. With a sore heart I went to bed at ten, and was wakened at three on Monday morning the 21st, with the most sorrowful news ever my ears conveyed to my heart,—that my best of fathers had then slept in Jesus, leaving behind him, in a

weary wilderness, a disconsolate wife, a numerous young family, many mournful relatives—a weeping flock—and had they known him—a sorrowful nation. When I heard he was no more, and saw him a lifeless, lovely corpse, I retired and prayed, and dedicated myself to God, and all my concerns to the care of the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth—for time and for eternity. On Wednesday, the 23rd, at three in the afternoon, I laid in a cold grave his last remains before weeping multitudes of concerned spectators. Oh may I die the death of the righteous, and my latter end be like his. Funeral sermons were preached by Mr. Randal * on the Thursday, from 'O death, where is thy sting?'—On the Sunday thereafter, by Mr. Scott at Kinfauns, from 'Our fathers, where are they? the prophets do they live for ever?' by Mr. Black from Revelation, and by Mr. Kemp from Psalm xv."

It was thus that the son wrote in the bitterness of his heart as he stood over his father's remains. But not less keenly did the stroke fall upon our Hidden One. Turning, however, from the departed to the surviving, as she compassionately remarks,— "The public felt and mourned for the loss of Mr. Bonar, but what must it have been to his disconsolate widow and his young and helpless family! Never-

* Minister of Inchture, first, and afterwards of Stirling. He was father of the Rev. Thomas Randal, or Dr. Davidson, one of the ministers of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh.

theless, as my dear mistress's day was, so was her strength, for the Lord never lays a burden on His children, but He gives strength to bear it; for although her husband was to her dear as her own life,—and well he might, for he was a most loving and affectionate husband,—yet she was enabled to say, 'Not my will, but Thine be done, O Father! for so it seemed good in Thy sight!'

"Just after his death, Mrs. Bonar also took the fever, and, in about the eighth day of it, she was delivered of a son. The fever continued, and she was brought so low that for several days all hope of her life was given over. Her child died; but it pleased the Lord to recover the mother.

"Although I was in the house, I knew nothing of all this distress, or of my master's death, but thought he was greatly better, for so they told me, thinking I was ill able to bear such heavy tidings. When I did hear it, my heart fainted within me. I mourned, or rather murmured, saying, 'Why is it thus? any other trial but this I could have borne.' I was really afraid of the workings of my own mind, but could not resist them, till that scripture came into my mind with irresistible energy:—'Be still, and know that I am God.' And, lest I should be swallowed up with grief and bitter sorrow, the Lord, in whom compassions flow, sent me a word of comfort from 1 Samuel i. 8, 'Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I

better to thee than ten sons?' From this scripture I was led to consider God as my portion; and this being the case, how ill it became me to mourn so excessively for the want of any temporal comfort, since God of His love has given me this precious portion? Oh, that He would also give me resignation to His will in all things! Another portion of scripture, much in my thoughts at this time, was the 23rd Psalm, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' Oh how sweet and suitable did this seem to me when my heart was broken with the loss of that tender shepherd who had such a care for the flock, and wisdom and understanding to direct and guide in the footsteps of the chief Shepherd of souls! How consolatory the thought that the Lord Himself promises to be the Shepherd of His people, and to feed them in the 'green pastures' of heavenly grace! Thus was I enabled to find Him in this my gloomy day.

"I also heard a sermon at this time which was blessed to me, both with respect to my own troubles and also with respect to my mistress's singular trials,—in the loss of her valuable husband, when her children were so young, and also in the loss of her means of subsistence, which were wholly taken from her in less than a year after his death; yet she maintained a firm trust in God, resting in His faithfulness who hath said, 'that bread should be given and water shall be sure to His own children.' This promise she

steadily believed, though Providence seemed to contradict its fulfilment to her. Indeed, I must say, I never saw such strong faith as she exhibited on this trying occasion, or such Christian meekness and fortitude as she displayed under such heavy trials. In her, grace shone through the whole of her trials."





CHAPTER IX.

Elizabeth Gow hesitates between the leading of inclination and the path of duty, but in the end is enabled to mortify the flesh, and do the will of God. “ *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.*”

AFTER the death of her husband, Mrs. Bonar found that, owing to various causes, it would be necessary to remove with her family to Edinburgh, and, having ample experience of her intelligence and worth, she wished that Elizabeth Gow might accompany her. To this proposal, however, Elizabeth's mother was strongly averse, and for a time the faithful servant was at a loss to determine her path of duty. Though not unwilling to stay, fain was she to go, and, in the end, it was made clear that her parents had the first claim upon her services, and she returned home. Yet only a few months had elapsed, when circumstances occurred which enabled Elizabeth, with the full approbation of her parents, to join her mistress in Edinburgh; and, in her case, was the promise verified as well as the command obeyed, “ Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first

commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."

"My mistress resolved to go to Edinburgh with her family; but I found that, however dear she was to me, I must part from her, as my parents would not allow me to go with her. I was greatly at a loss what to do, for my regard was great both for her and her family. I reasoned with myself what was my duty, and prayed for direction; for my mother told me that, if I went to Edinburgh, she would never get the better of it. Now, this I could not understand. It came into my mind concerning obedience, that the Rechabites, because Jonadab, their father, had commanded them to drink no wine, they would drink none, and their practice was commended of God. From this, and many other considerations, I saw it right to obey my parents. I cannot well say what case I was in all winter, but, for the most part, I was kept calm and serene.

"In the end of the year (1762), there was to be a minister settled in place of my worthy master. This was a renewing of my grief; but the Lord was very gracious in upholding me; and in the first sermon Mr. Scott preached he spoke to my very case, and greatly helped to allay my sadness. How gracious is our God, thus suiting His supplies to every necessity !

"Several things exercised me much at this time. The settling of a minister tended greatly to renew my

grief, and there were some things about Mr. Scott* which made me not very clear about hearing him. Notwithstanding, I was persuaded he was a child of God. Yet, in this matter, I thought he had taken a leap out of the way ; and some left the church on that account ; and every one counselled me to that which they thought to be right. But this would not do for me. I wanted direction from the Lord, and He was pleased to give it, for Mr. Scott's sermons were blessed to me from that time. Oh that I could praise the Lord for all His goodness, and interposing help, and consolation !

"The time for my mistress's removal to Edinburgh was drawing near, and I was greatly distressed on her account, as she was now deprived of all her means of support.† How this happened would be too tedious to be narrated here ; but it was a heavy affliction to see everything taken from her, considering that she had eight children, young and uneducated, and she herself a delicate and ailing woman.

"But I was comforted in her case by two things :—

* The Rev. James Scott, then minister at Kinfauns.

† Mr. Bonar had too easily become Cautioner for a brother ; and the Bill falling due, the Creditors insisted on payment. This involved him in such difficulties, that he was unable to make any provision for his Widow ; and Mrs. Bonar went to Edinburgh with no means of support but what her industry and the kind sympathy of Christian friends might supply. Her "*all*" of pecuniary substance only amounted to 35s. when she left Perth.

1st. That the world was not her portion, for the Lord Jehovah says He is the portion of His people ;—of this none could deprive her ! 2nd. The new and well-ordered covenant has made a competent provision for all who are interested in it—even of the good things of this life—in as far as it shall serve to their good and the glory of God, who has said, ‘Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in Me’ (Jeremiah xlix. 11) ; so I fully believed that both she and her children would be richly provided for.

“About the beginning of June, 1763, Mrs. Bonar went to Edinburgh, and I was sent to the Highlands with the three youngest children, who were very delicate, and had the hooping cough. Here I met with some things in Providence very sharp and trying. But, for ever blessed be the Lord, who upheld me under them all, and favoured me with a sweet calm of mind all the time I was in the country. This was a great blessing, considering the many outward things I was trysted with. On the Sabbaths I was richly feasted with the Word preached and the Sacraments dispensed in the neighbourhood.

“About the beginning of August (1763), I went to Edinburgh with the children, who were all recovered but the youngest. We were to walk part of the way, but the Lord interposed His aid, and helped me forward.

“I liked Edinburgh well on account of the many

gospel privileges with which it abounds;* but, according to my parent's desire, I returned home in a fortnight.

“ Parting with my dear Mistress and the Children filled me with grief and sorrow. But there was one thing comforted me, that Providence seemed to have opened a way in which she might be able to obtain a provision for her family. And the Lord raised up friends to her on every side, so that the pittance and the ‘small barrel of meal’ was not consumed. Oh what a faithful promise-fulfilling God have we to trust in our time of need !

“ After I came home to my father's house, I sunk into great distress and perplexity. Again I began to raze the foundation ; but how great the compassion of our glorious High Priest, who will not contend for ever, lest the spirit should fail before Him, but sent His word and healed me ? That gracious saying, in the 29th of Jeremiah, ‘ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.’ These words enabled me to believe that God was yet speaking peace to me, through the blood of His Son. But still the cloud of darkness hung over my mind. Yet I was enabled to wait about the Lord's hand, hoping and trusting in His salvation.

“ In the spring of the year (1764) my health declined,

* Drs. Webster and Erskine and Mr. Robert Walker were at this time ministers of Edinburgh, and Mr. Gibson one of the ministers of the West Kirk.

and I was brought very low. But the Lord was gracious to me, for, as my bodily health declined, He manifested Himself more and more to me as my God and Father, so that heaven and glory grew clear and bright, and I was able to view death with pleasure,—yea, at times with triumph. In this happy case I continued for weeks, quite resigned to the will of God, whether in life or death.

“About the middle of May the Lord was pleased to bless some medicines which were used, and I seemed to be in a way of recovery. This discovered to me a mistake I had been under, for I thought I was resigned to the whole will of God, when in reality I was not, for I began to grow fretful when I had the prospect of recovery. This certainly was an offence to the Lord, so ungrateful a return for the bounty shewn me, and provoked Him to hide His face, so that I could neither view life nor death with pleasure.

“I was in the country, in Mr. Kemp’s house, at this time. He had often been the Lord’s messenger to me, but I had said nothing to him. One day, however, it pleased the Lord to direct him to speak a word in season to my soul. This produced a calm resignation to His will, either for living or dying.

“For the space of two years I continued weakly. I had many ups and downs, and could discover but little fruit of all my afflictions, only I saw the evil of sin and the vanity of all earthly enjoyments. I likewise learned in my trials the uncertainty of human

friendship ; for some who had pretended great love to me formerly now stood at a distance, while others who had not professed so much, acted a far more friendly part, thus shewing that the hearts of all men are in the Lord's hands. I also learned that God is the spring of all happiness and solid joy ; so that, having an interest in Him and His favour, our lot and portion is infinitely good and inexpressibly pleasant. Although I had many bitter days, I had also many happy ones—
I often got such sweet breathing in prayer, and many rousing blinks in the word. Sometimes I have been tempted to think that perhaps I might be left destitute, if my health and strength were taken away. But the Lord, being very gracious to me, said, and enabled me to trust His promise, 'That bread should be given and water be sure.' Now all this time of my affliction I determined to rely on His faithfulness and veracity for the fulfilment of all He had said. The preached gospel was much blessed to me at this time. I needed consolation, and it was not wanting. On the second Sabbath of May (1767), the Lord's Supper was dispensed in Perth. This was a day of health and prosperity to my soul ; but soon after this my views began to be more clouded, and my spirit dead and languishing ; this continued most of the winter.

" After being some months in the country, my health being greatly improved, I returned to my father's house, intending to remain there, as my mother was grown very ailing, and required me. But I soon saw it

evident that this was not the Lord's will, for my health and strength began to decline fast. This was a great grief to me, because of my mother's weak state, and my anxiety to make her easy; but I could be of little use to her, and only added to her distress by seeing mine. So she at last consented to let me go to service, as I thought I was able for it. I then pled with the Lord that He would clear up my way.

“ My own inclination led me to return to Mrs. Bonar, for whom I had such an endearing regard; yet I durst not venture to follow my own will. I spake to my Christian friends to join with me in asking counsel of God; and, blessed be His name who heard, and returned an answer to my request, so that I saw it plainly my duty to go. My mother's health grew better, and all my friends advised me to go to Edinburgh, so that my mind was set at ease. But afterwards I began to fear that my want of health would make me only a burden to my dear mistress, if I was not able to do her work, and that I might be obliged to leave her family, and be cast destitute, and bring a reproach upon religion.

“ One day, being in the house alone, I was praying for deliverance from this temptation, when these words came with power into my mind from Isaiah xlvi. 3, 4, ‘ Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.’ These were blessed to me,

first as a rebuke for my unbelief and ingratitude, for I had experienced so much of the Lord's goodness in temporal blessings,—in providing liberally for me, so as to make my life far more easy and comfortable than many of His own dear children,—that it was very unworthy in me to be giving way to such thoughts, and doubting that God who had dealt so graciously with me in time past. But these words were also full of comfort and strong consolation, viewing God as a covenant God, and fully persuaded He would supply all my wants. So, when the time came for me to go to Edinburgh, I was enabled to leave all events to the Lord without anxiety, saying, in looking back on the past, He had done all things well."





CHAPTER X.

Elizabeth Gow returns to the service of her former Mistress : and makes great progress in spiritual life under the means of grace enjoyed at Edinburgh. “ *He that hath mercy on them shall lead them—even by springs of water shall He guide them.* ”

This cost Elizabeth Gow no small effort to relinquish the family with whom she had dwelt rather as a daughter than a domestic, and the interests of which were dear to her, as her own. But the sense of duty prevailed over the preference of inclination. Conferring not with flesh and blood, she simply asked, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? ” And it was not long until she found the promise made good, “ to him that soweth righteousness, shall be a sure reward.” In due time her way was made clear, to remove from Perth to Edinburgh. And whilst in her new residence she found a comfortable home, her soul was at the same time abundantly fed on the finest of the wheat.

“ It was about the beginning of 1768 when I left

my home in Perth. My journey was agreeable, and marked with mercy. When I came to my mistress's house in Edinburgh, I found her very pleasant and kind, and everything about the family agreeable. The children were growing up ; and some growing in grace : and every one loving and affectionate. Also my dear mistress was in a comfortable way as to worldly matters, with the blessing of the Lord on her slender store.

“ Soon after this Mr. Whitefield came to Edinburgh. I thought the preaching of the Gospel by him was like the beginning of a revival to me and many. In a few weeks he went away. I was sorry, on my own account, and also on account of these dear young ones who seemed to be setting out for the heavenly Canaan. But soon after we were favoured with a visit of Mr. Townsend.*

“ At this time my mistress was very ill. I was afraid she was dying. This was a great trial to me on many accounts, and made me often cry to the Lord, to avert such a calamity ; and I have found that, when praying for my mistress, or others in distress, my own bands were loosed, and I have enjoyed sweet freedom and nearness to God. This makes clear the duty of praying for others.

* The Rev. Joseph Townsend. He studied medicine at Edinburgh, but afterwards became Rector of Pewsey, Wiltshire. At the request of Lady Glenorchy, he was sent by Lady Huntingdon to Scotland, and laboured there with success. When in Edinburgh, he sometimes preached at five in the morning, and even at that early hour the church was crowded.

"Mr. Townsend preached his first sermon in Edinburgh, in July 1768, in the College Kirk, from Joshua xviii. 3, 'How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?' This sermon preached a reproof to me for my carelessness in performing my duty, and my slowness to believe. Though this sermon tended to distress me, yet it proved a spur, enabling me to cry to the Lord that He would quicken and revive me again. Mr. Townsend stayed about two months, in which time the Lord manifested Himself graciously to my soul. Yet still the evil heart of unbelief prevailed against me which is the bitter spring of an unholy life, filling me with carnal thoughts, and causing me to grovel in the dust.

"At this time Mr. Townsend had some remarkable sermons from Isaiah lx. 1, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come.' Towards the end he made offer of the Lord Jesus, in His full saving character. I thought I was neither able nor willing to come; but he took up this case, and spoke largely on it, breaking it up with the promise, 'Thy people shall be made willing in the day of thy power.' This was blessed to me; for I thought I was made willing to receive the Redeemer, or rather, He graciously condescended to come into my polluted heart, sprinkling it anew with His peace-speaking blood. O how precious the Redeemer appeared to me this night! I saw Him altogether lovely; I was also filled with strong shame, and self-loathing, that my love to

Him was so cold and my affections so set on carnal earthly things. I cried out, 'Lord, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.'

"One day I happened to meet with Mr. Townsend, and I told him how much I was discouraged and cast down because of the inconstant frame of my mind. After conversing some time with him, he told me one reason of this might be that 'though I was praying to be enabled to live by faith I wanted visible supports to that faith, which it pleased the Lord to deny, to bring me off my frames and duties, and everything excepting Christ; and he said that it was the business of faith to rely on the faithfulness of God in the promises. He also said that young Christians, especially those converted when young in years, are for the most part dandled upon the knee of sensible manifestations, and are so upheld by the everlasting arms of the Lord Redeemer, that they do not know their own weakness; but afterwards, the Lord, for sovereign and wise ends, withdraws from them, and permits them to fall, that they may learn that weakness, lest they should grow proud and self-confident, thinking their stock of grace and strength are in their own hand. From such falls they learn to cleave closer to Christ, and are brought out of themselves.'

"From these, and a number of other things which he said, I was much strengthened and confirmed in the ways of the Lord.

"At this time (1768) the sacrament of the Lord's

Supper was to be dispensed in the West Kirk. At this prospect my heart was glad ; I could not help wondering at the goodness of God in bringing me to this highly favoured place, where Gospel ordinances are in such plenty and purity, and where I had so often access to a Communion Table, where I enjoyed such sweet fellowship with the true God. Surely ‘the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;’ for I think I can say, that the House and Table of the Lord, with Secret Prayer, have been the happiest and most precious moments of my life. But we are ever ready to run into extremes on the right hand as well as on the left; for, when we do not get what we expect in these Ordinances, then we are apt to fret and grow weary ; or else to overvalue them, and put them in Christ’s stead.

“Mr. Hunter,* the minister of South Leith, preached from Jeremiah 1. 5, ‘Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.’ The doctrines and views he gave of the Lord’s willingness to enter into covenant with such hell-deserving rebels, were well suited to my present case; but yet my heart was unaffected. I thought, will nothing move me? for that forenoon there had been an awful thunder-storm which broke upon the Infirmary, and did much damage ; yet still I seemed to have lost all feeling. This threw me

* Afterwards Dr. Henry Hunter, minister of the Scotch Church, London Wall, in the metropolis.

into great perplexity, and I cried unto the Lord for quickening.

“ In the evening, Mr. Townsend preached in the Park.* His prayer expressed the very thoughts of my heart. ‘ He will regard the prayer of the destitute,’ was the subject from which he discoursed. And, oh ! what good grounds have I to praise the Lord, who makes the time of extremity the season of deliverance.

“ The Lord gave testimony at this time to the gospel preached, both by Mr T. and our own minister, in the conversion of sinners, and building up of saints ; so that there seemed a wonderful revival in our Sion. And how wonderful that the like of me should be so happy as not only to see it, but be made a sharer in it. What shall I say ? ‘ Is this the manner of man ?’ O Lord, make me thankful, and teach me to improve my precious privileges !

“ About the middle of September (1768), Mr. Townsend left Edinburgh, to the grief of me and many. I was grieved to think of being so attached to any man ; but I could not help it. I rejoiced in the prospect of that happy day, when all the redeemed company shall meet to part no more.

* The Orphan Hospital Park. Here Mr. Whitefield also used to preach ; and on the same spot Lady Glenorchy’s Chapel was built in 1774. Both Hospital and Chapel were removed a few years since to make room for the North British Railway : and the depot of that Company now occupies the ground where Whitefield, Townsend, and Jones, once preached the gospel with apostolic simplicity and fervour, and wondrous success.

“I began at this time to be much exercised about my mother; for I was persuaded she was a dying woman. This gave me many errands to a throne of grace in her behalf; for though I trusted that she was in a safe state, yet I feared it might not be a comfortable one; for I had but very confused accounts of her from my father. I got many seasonable promises on her account, and was kept praying and waiting their accomplishment, yet often in much doubt and uncertainty.

“The enemy persuaded me also with this temptation, that I had never yet fully closed with Christ, and was only deceiving myself, as many had done. I did not at first yield to this temptation, but tried to resist it, and to plead with God that it might be given me in behalf of Christ to believe on His name. But my perplexity increased, and I longed to pour out my grief to a Christian friend, who I knew was able to direct me. For this purpose I had appointed the place and time of meeting, where I might tell him all my complaints, and meet with sympathy and counsel. However, before the time came an accident happened in the course of Providence, which, though in itself very trifling, yet caused such a dispute between us, that we had no friendly intercourse for weeks. This was very grieving to me at this time, for during a long and friendly intercourse we had never been two days separate; and it gave the enemy great advantage against me, and he failed not to improve it.

“I wrote to a Christian friend in Perth, full of complaints and grief, but got no answer; so I thought surely the Lord has a controversy with me indeed, and will neither comfort me Himself, nor allow His children to aid me. These words were often in my mind, ‘All refuge failed me, none cared for my soul.’ I cannot describe the distress of mind I was in; *only I was enabled to hang about the Lord’s hand, trusting He would yet be gracious.* I was sometimes a little refreshed by secret prayer and reading my Bible, but I got no hope from the gospel preached.

“One evening I went to hear a sermon, desirous to try every means. The text was Isaiah xxi. 11, ‘Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night.’ The minister spake of the night of affliction, of temptation, and of desertion. This sermon described my case so plainly, that, had I told any person my condition, I should have thought they had told him; but, as I had not done this, I took it as a message from the Lord, and could only wonder at His great goodness to unworthy me.

“The next day I got a letter from my father, informing me that my mother was in a fever, and very desirous to see me. This news surprised me greatly, as I had heard that she was better the week before. This day, the 26th of January (1769), there was much snow on the ground; but I set out the next morning at six o’clock for Perth, and got there

about seven in the evening. It pleased the Lord to make my journey safe and comfortable.

“I found my mother better, though very weak; and I saw all the rest of my friends well.

“After being some time with my dear mother, I found her still in the dark. This distressed me much, not that I doubted the safety of her state, but I thought it would be more for the glory of God and the honour of religion and the strengthening and confirming of myself, if this darkness was removed. This led me often to plead that the Lord would clear up her evidences for heaven and glory. It is certain that her whole life was one continued evidence to me, and to others, that she was a child of God; yet I could not help desiring that she might be able to speak to the praise of His grace in her last moments. In prayer I had much liberty for her, and often enjoyed sweet moments in her behalf. And blessed be His glorious name, who heard and answered my prayer; for when death drew near, her fears of it, which had kept her in bondage all her life, were now taken away, and she expressed her joy that it was so near.

“After this time she spoke little, except in expressions of gratitude and wonder for redeeming love. It was matter of praise and thanksgiving to my much-indebted soul, that, in her case, God accomplished His promises; particularly that one on which He had often caused me to hope, ‘that at evening time it shall be

light.' So, about twelve o'clock, on April the 9th, she got an easy dismissal from a world of sin and sorrow to the brighter realms of light and glory.

"Notwithstanding the Lord's great goodness, both to her and myself, I found all my resignation and submission to seek; my fretful heart could not bear the parting stroke with childlike meekness. This gave me a new proof of the deceitfulness of my wicked heart; for when I saw my mother in distress of mind, I thought if the Lord would shine upon her with the light of His countenance, I could be well pleased to part with her; but now, when He had done so much, I was murmuring and discontented. I then cried to the Lord to send me unlimited resignation to His holy will, and pardon these fretful quarrellings with His dispensations. In a few weeks I returned to Edinburgh. My dear mistress showed me all the kindness of a mother. I prayed the Lord to bless and reward her.

"On the Sabbath after I came home Dr. Webster* lectured from 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18. This tended much to comfort me concerning my mother's death; and I for some time enjoyed inward peace and serenity.

"In the month of June the Sacrament was to be dispensed at Dunfermline. I wished to be there, but did not like to speak of going, lest it might not be convenient for my mistress; but on the Friday she asked me if I would not like to go? I gladly

* Minister of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh.

said I would; and told her that Miss Bonar would wish to go also. She, after knowing what was Miss Bonar's desire and intention in going there, consented to allow her to accompany me; so we both set out, and arrived safely on Saturday. The Lord was very gracious to me in secret prayer at this time, particularly on Miss Bonar's account.

"Mr. Bell preached from these words, Genesis xxxv. 3, 'Let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress.' The very reading of the text was better to me than many sermons have sometimes been, for every sentence came to my very heart. He gave a pleasing account of these Bethel meetings that believers are sometimes favoured with, while waiting on God in the way of His appointment. This brought to my mind some of my Bethel meetings, that seemed to melt my hard heart at the recollection of the Lord's wonderful love and superabounding grace to me.

"Mr. Gillespie, in his action sermon, spoke from the Song of Solomon ii. 14. The word came with power; also, in secret prayer the Lord was very gracious to me, particularly on my companion's account. Mr. Gillespie preached again, from these words, John xiv. 20, 'At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.' This sermon opened up to me a rich bundle of the mysteries of the gospel, exhibited to our view; and, blessed be His holy name, I could read my own interest in them.

"At his sacred Table I essayed, in the strength of the Lord, to give myself up to be wholly and only His, and found something of breathing after the Lord throughout the whole day. Mr. Gillespie had a table-service from the Psalmist's words, 'I looked on my right hand, but there was none that knew me ; all refuge failed.' That Scripture had been much in my mind last winter, and I felt its truth by bitter experience. He shewed the distress of a child of God might be in, while neither Christian friend nor minister could comfort ; yea, they might seem unwilling to do it. This would add to the affliction ; for the distressed soul would then say, the Lord hath hid His face ; yet if His children would pity and pray for me, it might be He will help me to carry the burden ; nay, it might lighten it ; but when they turn their back upon me, what am I to do ?

"On Monday we heard two refreshing sermons from Exodus xv. 26, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.' This was good news to me ; for my diseases were many and great.

"On Monday evening we came home joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness which God had bestowed on ourselves and others ; for many who were there spake highly of their matchless Saviour and seemed to have very comprehensive views of the love of God manifested to their souls through Him. I could not but praise the Lord on their account ; and likewise I was amazed at His loving kindness manifested to me. And it was also matter of praise to me that my young

companion had at that time tasted something of the love of espousals, and was enabled, by the eye of faith, to see the excellency of the Lord Redeemer in His person and offices.

“ Now every day was to me as a Sabbath, and every Sabbath like a Communion-day. About this time the Sacrament was again to be dispensed in the West Kirk, where I got a delightful view of Him who had poured out His soul unto death. How astonishing is it that He who is the Son of the most high God, the second person in the glorious Trinity, the wonder of angels, and admiration of saints, should stoop so low as to be numbered with transgressors, and take our nature upon Him, that He might be capable of suffering the punishment due to the guilty !

“ I was also favoured at this time with the delightful persuasion of my own interest in the work of saving sinners by his death; and I could anticipate that joyful day when I should be privileged to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. O matchless Saviour ! (I was led to cry out), cause me to comprehend something ‘ of the height and depth, and breadth and length,’ of Thy love.

“ In the months of June and July (1769), Mr. Towsnend was in Edinburgh, and preached on the Sabbath mornings and evenings, in the Orphan Hospital Park, to very great crowds; also on the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. It was indeed refreshing to sit under the droppings of the gospel, for the Lord

‘gave testimony to the word of His grace;’ many who seemed dead in trespasses and sins being made alive by the Divine Spirit, through the instrumentality of his preaching; and they who were in the fellowship of the gospel were roused and strengthened. It was indeed a shaking among the dry bones: and I would speak it to the praise of His grace, that I was at this time often made to ‘sit under His shadow with great delight,’ for the fruits of His purchase were sweet to my taste.

“And now also I got an answer for prayer, in respect of some Christian acquaintances. One day I accidentally met with a person I had seen at Dunfermline; we conversed awhile together; I was much refreshed; I desired she would carry on a correspondence with me. She said she would. She also introduced me to the acquaintance of several others, lively, shining Christians. I could not tell what to think of the Lord’s goodness to unworthy me, for I was surrounded with mercies, and loaded with favours, temporal and spiritual. But, oh! I foresaw not the dark cloud that was about to overwhelm me.”





CHAPTER XI.

Elizabeth Gow is again visited with trial ; but though perplexed, she is not in despair. *“Woe is me ! for my hurt. My wound is grievous ! But I said—Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it.”*

AFTER a residence in Edinburgh of not more than four years,—much esteemed by the godly, and singularly prospered of Him who claims to be “the husband of the widow,”—Mrs. Bonar fell asleep in Jesus ; and the faithful servant mourned for the loss of her affectionate mistress, in the bitterness of heartfelt sorrow.

“ My dear mistress was often distressed with violent headaches ; and, although naturally a very delicate woman in her married life, yet in her widowed, bereaved state, the Lord was pleased to stay ‘ His rough wind in the day of the east wind,’ and grant her an uncommon share of health and activity, which often called forth the gratitude of herself and others, and confirmed the faith of many, ‘ that as their day was, so should their strength be.’ Through this summer she enjoyed much delight in ordinances, and sweet intercourse with the

servants and people of God. Her house and her closet witnessed many Bethel visits.

“About the middle of November, 1771, she was taken with sickness on the Lord’s Day evening (17th Nov.), but continued without any alarming symptoms till the Wednesday, when the fever increased. She was quite recollected, and said she had no will but the Lord’s; that, if this was death, it was hid from her; that she ‘knew whom she had believed,’ and could commit all to Him; that He had helped her hitherto, and would not now forsake her. Her faith in the Lord remained unshaken throughout her distress; and, before another Sabbath, she had obtained a release from sin and sorrowing. Mrs. Bonar died on Friday the 22nd November, and her son John, from whose artless journal we gave (at p. 87), an extract relative to his father’s death, thus records the loss of his mother: ‘A fond, dutiful, affectionate parent, to an uncommon degree: taken from a weeping family of eight children—all surrounding her death-bed, but none able to avert the stroke,—friends deprived of a worthy companion, and the Church and world bereaved of a pious and holy woman! Last Sabbath morning she rose with the same keen desire of serving in the Earthly Temple which she always remarkably shewed. She accomplished that service; but for the last time; seeing that ere another opportunity of the kind returned, she was to join in the praises of the Higher House,—now celebrates the mercies of Redeeming

Love,—the chosen theme on which her soul delighted to dwell while in the cottage of clay. “O let me die the death of the righteous!” was the subject of the last sermon she ever heard. She now has experienced its full meaning.’

“This was a sad time of perplexity indeed; and many dark and trying hours succeeded. One wave rose on the back of another, yet the Lord upheld me from sinking; yea, often commanded deliverance both to me and the family. The winter passed on in great grief and anxiety. Yet the faithfulness of our God did not fail, neither did He forsake the seed of His servants.”

Only a short time before this time, Elizabeth Gow had seen her revered Minister laid in the grave. Soon after that grief she was sent for to close the eyes of a beloved Mother. And no wonder, therefore, if now when her honoured Mistress is taken from her side, she should say with Naomi, “Call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.”

Yet “the bruised reed is not broken.” Strong in faith, and comforted of the Holy Ghost, Elizabeth Gow made haste to wipe away her tears; and, though her wounds were still open, she commits herself at once to those duties which her altered circumstances seem to require. Influenced not less by gratitude to the dead than affection for the living, she agreed to remain with the children of her lamented Mistress—now orphans indeed, and all still unprovided for—and for several

years she continued to discharge among them the duties of a single servant with exemplary disinterestedness. It was no common labour she thus undertook, and the delicacy of her health might have warranted her to decline it. But loving the family, and loved by them in return, she gladly devoted herself to their interests, with the kindness of a relative, and the simplicity of a believer. All the day long she superintended the concerns of the household, as if she were its head ; and often would she spend half the night in intercession for the spiritual welfare of her charge. "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning," said Boaz of Ruth ; and a like testimony is due to Elizabeth Gow.

Owing, however, to the circumstances in which she was now placed, Elizabeth Gow had but little time at her command ; and at this date her Journal ceases. She still watched over her soul with deep solicitude, and lovingly pondered God's dealings with her. But instead of recording her experiences in a Diary, she now prefers to correspond with friends on all that interested her. And as these letters show how steadily she continued to advance in holiness and peace, until she fell as a shock of corn fully ripe, we cannot do better than complete our narrative by a selection of a few.

LETTER I.

NEW TOWN, 10th May, 1772.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

That God is Love, I have had many and striking proofs of, and since I saw you last have enjoyed another evidence that He is still the same.

You know the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed in the West Kirk; and as I am always very weak and faint, and very needful of some strengthening cordial, so I was very desirous to partake of the ordinance. The action sermon was from 1 Corinthians v. 7, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." I cannot tell you what a direct message from the Lord this sermon was to me, unworthy soul. The minister spoke of Christ giving Himself a sacrifice for His people, and of the keeping this gospel-feast in remembrance of His unparalleled love to them. He likewise spoke of a variety of trials which often happened to the pilgrims at their first setting out, and also through the whole course of their journey, and how the Lord delivered them, making the deepest laid plots of their enemies subservient to His glory and His people's good; so that He gave a better description of the way through which the Lord has brought me than I could have done myself; at least he expressed it better.

My soul was much strengthened and comforted, so that I could not but wonder at the Lord's goodness in directing me to go there that day; for, in the morning,

I was very much cast down, and knew not where to go to get something to support my fainting soul ; this made me pray earnestly that the Lord would send me where I would get a word in season to my weary soul ; and I there saw so much of the preciousness of Christ, that I could not rest until I should get Him enthroned in my heart, so that I held Him, and would not let Him go until He blessed me.

Something of this happy frame continued through the week ; but when the next Sabbath morning arrived, I was very dry and parched; nothing in or about me but darkness, deadness, and unbelief, so that I had no plea but rich sovereign Grace, and no title to that but through the Lord Jesus Christ. This, indeed, is the case at all times, but there are some seasons when we are more sensible of it than at others. In short, at this time I was full of wants ; but I thought if I could only get Christ in the arms of my faith, my wants would be supplied, my grievances redressed, and all my wrongs righted ; so that I could not be blessed till I got some sensible evidence of nearness to Christ, and communion with Him ; which, ever blessed be His name, He permitted me to experience.

I am to be at Dalkeith in a week or two, if the Lord will, to partake of this feast of love. Oh pray that my fellowship may be with the Father, and the Son, through the ever blessed Spirit.—Your unworthy but affectionate friend,

E. G.

LETTER II.

EDINBURGH, November, 1772.

I can make no excuse for my silence, but want of time and health; and believing you will forgive this, I shall proceed to write what the Lord may give me to say at this time, upon the one thing needful.

I have just been reading that affecting piece of sacred history in 2 Samuel vi. chapter; and was struck at what is written in the first part of it, which contains an account of the believer's experience; for how often does it happen, that there is some particular providence about which we have often prayed, and God has fed our hopes by His promises? We think we see the fruit of our prayers, and all things go on according to our wishes; *then* we can believe; but when on a sudden He makes an unexpected breach, deadens our hopes at the time when we are rejoicing before the ark, then *still* to believe is a hard matter indeed. But difficult as it is, the only way to peace and comfort of mind is to take God at His word, *to credit Him as God*, lay aside carnal reasoning, and keep our eye fixed on the promises, and, like Abraham, not staggering through unbelief.

This precious faith is from the Lord alone. O! did we always feel this, we should not be so often complaining; the only way is to come daily to the fulness of Christ as poor sinners, persuaded we are miserable without Him, but that in Him we have both righteousness, and strength, and unchangeable, ever-

lasting righteousness—a righteousness that needs nothing to make it accepted, (Psalm lxxi. 16)—a righteousness which will enter heaven with us, and is a sufficient title to eternal blessedness. Here is the foundation of our hope. When health and strength fail, our days shorten, and nature is dissolved, this stands eternally the same. Jesus is a tried God, a never-failing, unchangeable portion, in whom we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb. *Clear views of His fulness is the best thing to animate us in the divine life, and these are to be got from the Scriptures.* There, Jesus is set forth full of grace and truth, full of compassion to sinners, (John vi.), full of pity for backsliders, (Jeremiah ii.) (Hosea xiv.) full of love to His people (John xvii.) but without the mighty power of God, and the Holy Spirit to seal the word, we will continue cold and ignorant.

But sometimes He does this beyond our hopes and expectation in some happy hour. David found this, as we learn by that sweet account of his experience, (Psalm xxx.) I have not time to write you the thoughts which occurred this morning when reading it, only you may observe the following things:—That he enjoyed a happy frame. This he lost by his backsliding. The word “healed,” implies he was wounded by sin—the consequence of this—the course he takes—his arguments in prayer—God’s answer—the improvement David made, and his reflection on the whole. Blessed are they that wait on the Lord. That He may ever be

your portion and comforter is the earnest prayer of
your affectionate well-wisher,

E. G.





CHAPTER XII.

Elizabeth Gow is diligent in business, yet fervent in spirit ; and, though her hands are full, her soul is not impoverished."

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

NO one can read the letters which follow without remarking the spiritual growth they evince, and admiring the polished vigour that characterises the style in which they are written. Laborious as were the duties of her station at this period, Elizabeth Gow did not close her Bible and forget her soul, as if the necessities of time could ever justify the neglect of eternity ! On the contrary, "the word of Christ dwelt more richly" in her than heretofore ; and, after the fatigues of the day were over, the children in bed, and the darkness of the night around, she would take up her pen, saying, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ! The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."

LETTER I.

27th May, 1773.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS,

We may truly unite in saying "God is love." He loved us when we were enmity itself, hateful, and hating one another. But, rather than we should perish, He gives His only begotten Son to suffer and to die for such unworthy objects, and He manifests His everlasting love towards His people in the daily and renewed pardon He bestows, and the shedding abroad of His love in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost. But, oh ! what black ingratitude prevails in those who are thus so wonderfully dealt with. Were I to tell you all the aggravated ingredients of my case at this time, it would far exceed the bounds of a letter ; but I would turn to a more delightful theme, and speak of the unparalleled love of God to unworthy me, in that He did not give me up, or make me a terror to myself and all around me ; but still continues to make known to me His great love, in the condescending visits of His grace.

You may remember that, in my last to you, I spoke of the delightful sense of the divine love I was favoured with in the day the Sacrament was dispensed in the West Kirk. In the morning, at least to my apprehensions, the matchless well-beloved of my soul was absent ; but I was not only desirous, *but restless with desire to see His glory and feel His power.* The Action sermon was good and suitable, but I could not

hear with composure, for still He was absent. But Mr. Gibson, in serving the Second Table, spoke of the duty and privilege to remember the love of Christ more than wine. Yes, I thought, I could remember His love more than created enjoyments; And that word was brought with power to my fainting heart, "I remember then the kindness of my youth, and love of thine espousal;" and, likewise, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." With these scriptures came such a sweet and soul-satisfying discovery of the love of God in Christ, as I cannot with tongue or pen express; for, while I thought on these astonishing words "noted in the scriptures of truth," and spoken to me by the Spirit of truth, I was lost in wonder and astonishment that, vile and unworthy as I found myself to be, I could thus, from experience, testify that "God was love."—Ever affectionately yours,

E. G.

LETTER II.

12th June, 1774.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You think that I have forgotten you, and I sometimes fear you have also forgot me. Now, though both these should be true, yet still I trust we both can say, we have a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother,—a Friend whose power is almighty, whose wisdom is infinite, and whose matchless love is beyond what we can conceive; He remembers us still. How

astonishing are His words to His people, “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” she may, but the compassionate Redeemer never can forget any of His children: they are graven on the palms of His hands. I as firmly believe this as I do my own existence, in my calm judgment. But does not the language of my daily practice testify against me; for did I believe that His eyes are ever upon me for good, could I be so faint-hearted? Did we really believe practically the greatness of God’s love to us guilty worms, it is impossible we could be so cold or so little affected with this mystery of matchless loving-kindness in the work of our redemption.

That the adorable Trinity should hold a council, and enter into a covenant about such worthless sinners as we are; that He should take our nature upon Him, and in that nature bleed and die! I am often filled with pain and bitterness that I am so blind and ignorant on the only point of knowledge worthy of search.

Paul desired to “know nothing else but Christ crucified;” but *my* time and attention are directed to everything else,—this is owing to my blindness and unbelief. I think if the blessed Jesus would say to me, as He did to the blind men of old, “What would ye that I should do unto you?” I would answer as he did,—Lord, that I may receive my sight; that I may see thy matchless beauty; may see the Saviour in the glory of His person, and suitableness of His offices. This only constitutes a Christian,—a speculative

knowledge floating in the head will not do ; I want to have a saving, heart-purifying knowledge of myself and the Lord Jesus. I am truly but a useless branch in the Lord's vineyard, yet it is not for want of the pruning-knife under various trials and difficulties, and also of many precious seasons of waterings and consolations. But it's strange I never grew stronger or more fruitful under all His dealings. This makes me long to be beneath the meridian-beams of the Sun of Righteousness, that I may bring forth fruit to the praise of the glory of His grace, and be in some happy measure conformed to His image. O pray for me, and write me when you can ! I have much need of every help. May grace, mercy, and peace be ever with you.

E. G.

LETTER III.

September, 1774.

DEARLY BELOVED,

You will remember, in your last letter, you spoke of the frequent experience that the children of God have of being long exercised about some particular blessing, and that in the meantime God seems to feed their hopes, so that we think we have seen the fruit of our prayers, and everything goes on according to our wishes; *then* it is easy to believe.

At this time, I feel exercised in this way about both spiritual and temporal matters for the accomplishment of which I thought I had the promise sure to me ; and

for a time Providence seemed to confirm the promise. Now, in such a case as this, when God in a sudden deadens and damps our hopes, and makes an unexpected breach, as in the case of Uzza, it is hard to believe: indeed, so hard that it cannot be done but by the Omnipotent power of Jehovah,—for we are short-sighted, but yet would be very wise; and if, by the course of Providence, some of these things about which we have been so exercised shall fail us altogether, what are we to think? We are not to wonder that things that we had expected, should not take place as we planned. But what troubles me is, Whence comes it that a child of God is thus exercised?

For some time past I was in a very sad frame of mind,—dead and carnally-minded, seldom engaged in prayer, and all sense of divine things like to wear off. But blessed be God, who suffered me not to continue in this state, but spoke to me in a voice of thunder,—for I was visited with a sore and very sharp affliction, and I feared as I entered the cloud. However, in the dark hour I was not altogether forsaken; the Lord graciously supported and comforted me. I now found many errands to the Throne of grace, and, blessed be His name, He did not spurn me away, but allowed me to pour out my heart before Him with freedom and enlargement. Indeed, I was sometimes afraid to offend, by praying so earnestly for the removal of the rod. However, He still favoured me with liberty, and sometimes with words of comfort; and in His own good time He

removed the affliction. To onlookers, my distress might not seem so severe, but it was attended with circumstances which made it heavy to me. But I have seen much of His love in trying me with this affliction to awaken me out of sleep, and lay me under the blessed necessity of fleeing to Himself for refuge and help.

I am now resolved to leave the family at the term. Give me a share in your supplications, and entreat the Lord to clear up my way, and direct me what to do. I am still in the mind about taking a shop, but many fears and obstacles present themselves ; but I will trust His Word—and look to the leadings of His Providence.

—Ever affectionately yours,

E. G.





CHAPER XIII.

Elizabeth Gow finds it necessary to leave the Family she had so long served—and casts herself on God for her means of support. “*Go up in peace to thine House, see, I have hearkened to thy voice and have accepted thy person.*”

AT no period of her life had Elizabeth Gow enjoyed robust health—but in consequence of the labour and fatigue she required to undergo as an Only servant, her ailments increased; and fearing lest she might become a burden to her youthful friends, she determined to look out for the means of earning a livelihood independent of them.

Though at first inclined to dissuade her from the step she contemplated, no sooner were the Family satisfied that her mind was made up, than they lent her all the assistance in their power; and by the liberality of others whom they interested in her case, they soon had the gratification of seeing her provided with a convenient shop, and established in a comfortable dwelling.

Recognizing the answer of prayer, and the love of a heavenly Father, in the success which had, thus far,

attended her scheme, Elizabeth Gow resolved that she would openly acknowledge the hand of God in what had been done for her; and calling together her Christian friends and acquaintances, they united in dedicating her house to the Lord. From that day, too, a Weekly prayer-meeting was commenced under her roof, which continued to diffuse much blessing till the time of her death. And, in all probability, it was to some of the Godly ones who were wont to join with her on these occasions that the letters we now give were addressed.

LETTER I.

July, 1775.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD.

I doubt not you will think it strange I have not written you ere now; but, since June I have been in very ill health, and so taken up in searching and prying into the language of this and the other dispensation of Providence, that I could scarcely write or think on any other subject. But the Lord was gracious to me in the time of my deepest distress, and gave me suitable and seasonable support. What I would chiefly have been at was to know the Lord's mind and my duty. Now, in all other cases of this kind, I used to be guided by some one, or by several texts of Scripture; and so I prayed for this again and again: but the Lord did not see meet to grant me this: so that I was often in great perplexity.

But the last time Mr. —— was in town, I was called to family worship. I looked to the Lord that He would send me something to quiet my distracted mind. He gave out, for singing, a part of the 32d Psalm. These words came with power,

“I will instruct thee, and thee teach
The way that thou shalt go;
And, with mine eye upon thee set,
I will direction shew.”

These were comforting to me for many days, where everything else failed me.

When I was for several days searching out for a shop, and could find nothing to suit me, everything seemed above my reach ; yet these words were so strong in my mind, as to keep me in perfect peace, knowing He would fulfil His own promise.

However, there is one thing I would mention ; I asked of the Lord to clear up to me what He called me to do, and I thought that I would be content with my lot as coming from the Lord, be it what it would. This I thought I asked with a single eye ; but, upon strict inquiry, I found myself dissembling. For, when the Lord, in His Providence, called me to leave this house, my heart cleaved more to the Family than ever, and I was unwilling to move, till He shewed me that he was contending with me. But, blessed be His holy name, *He hath made me sit at the feet of Sovereignty*, knowing He doth all things well ; and “what I know

not now I shall know hereafter." Upon the whole, the Lord's doings with me this summer have been in wonderful condescension and loving-kindness. Help me to praise His blessed Name!

Write soon to your unworthy correspondent, but most affectionate friend in our dear Lord. Grace and peace be ever yours,

E. G.

When still a servant in Mrs. Bonar's family, Elizabeth Gow had been struck with the singular gentleness and spirituality which, at a very early age, distinguished the fourth son—Archibald—afterwards minister at Cramond—and as the time for his being Licensed drew near, she poured out her intercessions in his behalf with remarkable earnestness. The young student of Divinity was, on his part, not less ready to appreciate the Christian worth of his humble, but heavenly-minded friend, and as laying much store by her prayers and counsels, he was not ashamed to send, and to receive such letters as those which we subjoin:—

LETTER II.

From MR. ARCHIBALD BONAR.

DEAR LIZZY,

I received a most refreshing letter from you a great time ago, for which I desired my sister to thank you, and which I would have answered long

before now; but—I know not what excuse to make, yet I hope and beg your excuse. However, whether or not you hear from me or any other, I hope the Lord Himself visits you much and often in your busy retirement, and causes showers of blessing to flow down, fixing in you His constant dwelling.

I know there is a need-be that you and I and all should have difficulties, sometimes troubles, sometimes sore trials. You do not perceive all my distresses, nor I yours; this is the great loss that we are not free enough in disclosing our anxieties. The afflictions of the justified are many; heaven seems united with earth and hell in vexing the believer. Trials from above, temptations from below, corruptions from within, conspire to pull him down from hope, holiness, and happiness. This our merciful High Priest well knows, and has provided cordials for every trouble, deliverances for every calamity, so that amidst all our perplexing thoughts within us, comforts are supplied "to delight our souls." The comforts He has provided arise either from present promises and enjoyments, or future hopes and prospects. To support and rejoice us even here, we have the certain assurance that the Lord liveth, and never leaveth His people; that love as well as justice is the language of every trial,—that deliverance will come—that before it comes, abundant support will be bestowed—and that the benefit will far outweigh the pain. Besides, there are many and great and precious promises fitted for

every case, and fit to comfort in every time; and when we get the length to believe, to plead, and feel these promises, our hell is changed to heaven, sorrow to gladness, and pain to pleasure.

But this is a "*strange* land," and though we are required to sing "*the Lord's song*" in it, we can scarcely do it. We do not always attain even entire resignation, and but seldom a welcome acquiescing in, and joyful praising for our crosses; yet we need never sorrow as hopeless. Whatever burdens we have to carry here, and however stormy the passage through life may be, there is a land of rest at which every believer shall safely, and many of them triumphantly arrive. This is the second ground of consolation, and of strong consolation, which the Lord hath given His people under their severest sufferings. Every wave of adversity tosses them a step nearer their wished-for, promised, approaching harbour; the sovereign Disposer of all sits at the helm, and the deeper their sorrows, the higher they will sing.

O how surpassing human thought must glory be! inhabited by the God of love, by Jesus our all, by the Spirit of everlasting consolation; how large, how lasting the bliss! O how poor every conception, but how ravishing the hope! and all purchased, promised, prepared by Him who glories in the character of "*Friend of sinners*"—your friend and mine, it is to be hoped—and if our friend, our All; and if our all, what can we want though perishing

for hunger, or pinched with poverty? How can we complain though persecuted, perplexed, or brought low? Why should we murmur though forsaken, forgot, opposed, or oppressed?

Lizzy, I wish you would write me often; I wish I were compelled by gratitude or grace to write you often, as I have always comfort and liberty when writing to you, and your letters to me are always refreshing. How prospers business, health? &c., &c.

In return for your last letter, and my long silence, I send you some old letters of Mr. H——'s, which I found copied; some of them perhaps not interesting to you, but some of them you will like.—Your affectionate friend,

ARCHIBALD BONAR.

LETTER III.

To MR. ARCHIBALD BONAR.

EDINBURGH, 22nd August, 1775.

I received your long-looked-for letter, and was greatly refreshed by it. Want of time and health kept me from answering it sooner. You say truly, "you do not know all my difficulties, nor I yours." I doubt not they are many; and I feel mine to be the same. Some of them are, that, having too small a stock, my business is but little, and frequent want of health makes me unfit for exertion; then a tempting devil and strong corruptions to struggle with; and, above all, an evil heart of unbelief. *I would still be*

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well even in the midst of difficulties, could I but believe. There are two promises which have been strong ground of consolation to me for years past, and I got a new and refreshing view of them on coming to this house (Isa. iv. 6), where the Lord says, "Hearken unto me, O house of Israel; even to old age am I he; I will deliver you." The other is in Hebrews, where He saith, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Now, could I but believe these precious words, certainly I could triumph in all difficulties; and I will own it, that the Lord, of His infinite and rich grace, often enables me to trust and rejoice in Him; though, at other times, when brought into straits, I find it no easy matter. Yet I can say, from experience, that I have often found that the time of my extremity was that in which the Lord stepped in wonderfully to my relief. And truly, if we would judge wisely, we would not desire to be without afflictions, for by them we learn many a useful lesson. In the refining furnace we discover the dross that we did not think was to be found in us. This has often been the case with me in severe afflictions. How often have I been brought to see and to feel impatience and fretfulness I little suspected. This lays us low in the dust, and fills us with loathing before God, and has often made me to wonder that we are not consumed. It gives a glorious discovery of the riches and sovereignty of Divine grace, that

can so love creatures so unworthy ; and thus leads us to prize and improve the righteousness of the Redeemer, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. That your soul may prosper under all His dispensations is the earnest prayer of your soul's well-wisher,

E. G.

LETTER IV.

14th November, 1775.

I received yours, and thank you for it. You say it is a favour which I am doing you, to tell you what God has done for my soul ; and surely it becomes us, with thankfulness and humility, to declare what He has done for us, that He may be glorified, and we may be strengthened, confirmed, and comforted together. O may He bless these few lines for this purpose !

In my last, you may remember, I mentioned three precious promises, from which I found great comfort long ago, but have not yet received their accomplishment. The first of them was, "Sin shall not have dominion over you ;" yet, to this moment, sin rages, yea often prevails against me. But I think the uniform desire of my heart is, that God would break its power in me.

The next promise was, "My Maker is my husband." Now, though I cannot always see the comforting truth of this astonishing word in my daily felt experience, yet glory, glory to my dearest Lord, I have often felt

its sweetness, and the Redeemer acting to me the part of a husband. *First*, in paying all my debt to law and justice : and oh ! what love is this. *Second*, in bringing my soul out of prison, and clothing me in the habit of His righteousness ; and in feeding, yea, feasting, my starving soul with royal dainties of heavenly provision, sheltering me from storms, and drawing me from deepest waters. It would be delightful to enlarge on each of these, and mention many more of His wondrous doings. O join with me in praising His glorious name ! *Thirdly*, He hath, in some measure, enabled me to see the promise fulfilling,—“that it is good for me to be afflicted,”—that trials of whatever kind are under the direction of infinite wisdom and love, and shall terminate to His glory and my everlasting good.

Sabbath last, you know, the Lord's Supper was dispensed here; and for ever praised be His holy name ! for I am persuaded He was made known to His children “in the breaking of bread.” For my own part I never experienced a more delightful day. I often thought it truly an emblem of heaven. I never felt languid or weary, but was sorry to think such a sweet season would so soon be ended.

Oh, what must the joy of those be who surround the Throne, when even the distant rays of the Sun of Righteousness do so enliven and cheer the soul. If the streams are so sweet, what must it be at the fountain-head, when, with expanded view, the redeemed company shall receive new discoveries of the greatness

and glory of the matchless love of Christ through a happy eternity?

What think ye now, my dear friend, of our rich and fair inheritance? How should it rejoice and delight our soul, to think that, in a short time, this frail body shall be laid aside, with every incumbrance which now cleaves to us, and our souls presented spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. *Oh! do you not long to see the face of matchless Christ without an intervening vail?* I long to be with Him, that I may see Him as He is; but my kind heavenly Father has ordered things so, that something still lies before me to be done yet; this keeps me "waiting with patience till my change comes." There are many things abstract from ourselves, which would make us desire to depart, and get home to our Father's house; for this "is a dark and cloudy day," a day of trouble and perplexity. The Lord hath a controversy with us, though we know it not. O may we be kept faithful, always "abounding in the work of the Lord," seeking to promote His glory, and showing forth His praise.

Good cause have I to praise His name; for when ready to fail He graciously vouchsafes to visit me with His supporting arm. Sometimes He sends a direct message by the hand of some of His dear servants; at another time He brings a promise, with light and power suited to my need. Sometimes He allows me to pour out my heart before Him, enabling

me to believe that, in due time, He will hear my petition, and answer my prayer; so that often I am ashamed of my unbelief, and the ingratitude of my heart towards so gracious a God.

I believe few of the Lord's people are so highly favoured as I am, and none so ill-deserving. O pray for me, and with me, that at length I may in some measure walk worthy of the high privileges I am favoured with, and not alway continue a barren tree in the Lord's vineyard. Will you request for me at a Throne of grace that I may be blessed with a greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—as there is in His offices something suitable to every situation—and that knowing Him, I may be taught to improve Him in every case of need, that I may attain to conformity to His blessed will.

May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush rest and abide in you.—Your affectionate friend in our dearest Lord,

E. G.





CHAPTER XIV.

Elizabeth Gow succeeds in Business, but her desire and effort to be Useful continue unabated. *“Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day—witnessing both to small and great.”*

THE petty trade of Elizabeth Gow gradually increased, and in due time, the Shop yielded her the means of comfortable subsistence. Her lonely dwelling was still a sanctuary where much “Prayer was wont to be made,” and Godly neighbours lovéd to resort to it for fellowship and advice. Less occupied and less anxious, too, than she had been for several years past, her mind was more at ease and her day was more her own, and “whatsoever her hand found to do” for God, she did it with equal delight and vigour.

“Constrained,” as her soul was, “by the love of Jesus,” and touched with concern for those who were ready to perish, doubtless, had she lived in our age, Elizabeth Gow would have embraced the privilege of serving the Lord either as a Teacher, or a Visitor, with unspeakable gladness. But in lack of such opportuni-

ties, and not able to remain inactive in the vineyard, she persevered in Corresponding with all who were likely to receive her counsel, or who might be benefited by the statement of her experience—"witnessing," through her Letters, "to great and small."

Much is written by believer to believer, in these days, without a word to indicate what manner of spirit they are of—and often do we restrain our pen in selfish indolence, when a few lines would be as balm to a sorrowing heart. But our Hidden One writes, "Christian Correspondence is so useful that Satan tries all his arts to hinder it. Yet we need not be silent, having such glorious things to write about," and "it is our duty to write so oft as time will allow."

Would that this last sentence were pondered as it ought to be, and Elizabeth Gow's example followed by others ! Grafting on to our active zeal, the silent word of "Christian Correspondence," let our short ^{est}Note breathe at least a prayer, and, at times, let us seek to convey by Letter, those fears, and desires, and warnings —those hopes, and longings, and consolations, which, either in timidity or unbelief, we would not dare to whisper from lip to ear.

LETTER I.

November, 1776.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I find it not easy to keep the mind composed and unmoved in the midst of dark or distressing times. The untender walk of some, the griefs of God's dear

children, and "the love of many waxing cold," are often perplexing to me. At present, there is one of His dear Hidden ones, who has been under distress of mind to such a degree, that she was for a while deprived of the use of her reason. O pray for her, and pray for me ! Pray that I may be taught of God, " and led unto all truth." This is a time when we are all called upon to search the Scriptures, joined with earnest prayer, that we may understand the meaning of the Spirit in them.

I wrote lately to a dear friend, attempting to prove that there may be and often is as much sensible communion and nearness to God enjoyed in secret or soul Prayer, in reading the Word, and in singing Praises to His name, as at a Communion Table ; but I think the great mistake is, we are not sufficiently impressed with the majesty of God when we worship, and with whom it is our high privilege to have communion in these days in eating the Lord's Supper. We are also too ready to look for comfort at the Lord's table ; and, if He sees meet to disappoint our hopes, we are depressed and ready to write bitter things against ourselves ; thus limiting Him to times and places, which is dishonouring to His holy name.

My business is better than in summer, but still there is much need for trust and patience, and I would acknowledge His hand stretched out in my behalf.—
Yours,

E. G.

LETTER II.

EDINBURGH, 23rd December, 1776.

DEARLY BELOVED IN OUR MATCHLESS REDEEMER,

I received yours, and cordially thank you for it. Various things prevented me writing till this time; yet, be assured, I do not forget you. But I can tell you what is far better—your heavenly Father forgets you not; for of His church, and every member in it, He says, “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before Me” (Isaiah xlix. 16). I would advise you to read the whole of that chapter. Read it often; and may the Spirit of wisdom and revelation open your eyes to see the glorious truth contained in it. In the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses, there is a rich cluster of precious promises, loadened with the fruits of the tree of life. In verse 8th, the Holy Ghost causes the prophet to proclaim the Covenant made to the elect. His beloved Son, in a way of wonderful condescension, becomes the Father’s righteous Servant, and then follow the blessings of this glorious transaction. In the 9th verse, it is promised that Christ, as the Covenanter with the Father, shall say to the prisoners, Go forth! and we know that His word is with power. Sweet sound! Glorious liberty! For you know we are prisoners to law and justice; prisoners to Satan and to our own lusts. O then, what is it to be made free? Happy soul, to whom Christ says, “Go forth,” and to them that sit in darkness, “Show yourselves.”

There appears to me a wondrous depth of love to sinful worms, that the Lord Jesus, in our-law room and stead, became the Father's servant; and, in that character, answers all the demands of law and justice. Many are brought out of prison; and, like Joseph of old, they get change of raiment; they are clothed in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God—so, what He did and suffered is reckoned to their account, as much as though they had done it themselves. Now they are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb; clothed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of Christ imputed to the saints, and so are called to shew themselves; for, under this cover, God sees no iniquity in them.

But, after they are brought into the family of God, and as Paul expresses it, “espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ,” a long time intervenes, and they have often a long and perilous journey to travel through the wilderness before they are brought home to their Father's house. Many a dangerous snare and precipice; earth and hell is set against them from without, and a world of sin in their hearts.

You will be ready to say, this is a dismal account of the way to the kingdom of God. It is so, and it is true, for Scripture says it: “Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.” How then shall we get safe to our Father's house? Glory to our God, we are not left without hope in this case, but have strong ground of consolation.

In the constitution of the new and well-ordered Covenant, wherein the glorious Persons of the Trinity stand engaged, the Father says, I have made a covenant with my chosen, wherein He gives His Elect to the Son to be redeemed. They are His ; He hath paid down the price. He is the vine ; they are the branches. He is the head ; they are the members. It is not then possible that any shall perish ; for Christ hath said, "Because I live, ye shall live also," and many such precious promises are given to the same purpose.

What though they may be blind, and often know not where to set down a foot ? Then says Jehovah to them, in His precious Word, "I will lead the blind by a way that they know not of ;" and, when they are not able to walk in it, He promises to be "a leader and commander to them ;" yea, rather than any should fall by the way, "He will carry the lambs in His bosom." What, then, though we are weak and helpless, and our enemies many and strong, while the everlasting arms of Jehovah are underneath and around us ?

May this be your happy portion and mine ; then we need not fear. He will bring us through all the danger of the way, and land us safe in the kingdom of our Father ; therefore, let us comfort one another.

E. G.

LETTER III.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I consider you as an old veteran Soldier of Christ Jesus, who has followed your leader, yet some-

times deserted Him too, but who, through grace, can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight of faith, henceforth there is laid up for me an eternal crown of glory." As for myself, *I seem to be but half-awakened*, not yet armed with the whole armour of God, beset on all hands by numerous enemies, ready to draw back to perdition, unless every moment upheld by Omnipotent power. I am, therefore, most unfit to advise you on spiritual things, and it is your duty to write and admonish me as oft as your time will allow. Alas! how unable am I to speak or to write about divine things! If ever a dead soul inhabited a living body, it is mine. Alas! what inconsistent creatures are we! Our warmest wishes languish, and Satan leads us captive.

Paul says, that all he had to preach was, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and this is all that believers have to know and to feel; and this is enough—the riches of His grace to believers in uplifting, guiding, and comforting them—the riches of His grace to feeble doubting saints, in promising, in performing, in delivering them from all their fears and doubts—and the exceeding riches of His grace, even to backsliders, when He heals, revives, and animates them anew—the riches of His love and grace to you and me, in what He has already done for us, and in us, and what He has promised to do, and will, without fail, accomplish in our behalf. O let past experience of this grace encourage and strengthen us, and let a deep sense of our own utter weakness and insufficiency make us

glory the more in Christ's fulness and all-sufficiency to pardon and redeem.

I can add no more. May the grace of our own great Immanuel be with us through time and through a blessed eternity.

E. G.

LETTER IV.

DEAR FRIEND AND FELLOW-TRAVELLER,

It is long since I heard from you, and longer since I wrote you; which is my loss. *Christian correspondence is so useful, that Satan tries all his arts to hinder it*; yet we need not be silent, having such glorious things to write about. Every day furnishes new matter, and every day brings with it new trials; and although tribulation does not always work "patience," it at least works "experience;" it shews how easily our hopes are disappointed; how often, when one door is shut against us, God opens another; and how often He is perfecting what concerns us, when we think He is neglecting our interest altogether. The 23rd chapter of Job is a very striking one. Often with Him are we made to cry out, "O that I knew where I might find Him." We go forward in the use of means, but the eye of faith is so dim that we cannot perceive Him; then in fretfulness we go backward, neglecting duties, and languishing in our natural sloth and indifference—then, indeed, we cannot find Him.

This is our language,—"O that we knew where to find Him"—"we would order our cause before Him!"

Every vexation should lead us to seek Him He. is a very present help in time of need. Oh the joy of getting the heart poured out before Him, when He shews Himself as our God, our counsellor and conductor, our perfect righteousness, our perpetual and all-powerful friend, and our glorious All. *When the soul is thus lost in God, trials are easy, and burdens light—increasing griefs are increasing mercies.* Deep sorrows are sometimes exchanged for loud songs even here, and we know they will be exchanged to this, when the mysterious plan is fully unravelled at the appearing of our God and Saviour. Then the wondrous volume shall be unfolded, and then it will appear that all events were ordered by the infinite wisdom, and conducted to the glory of that Jesus who sits on the throne and reigns over all—of that Redeemer whose death you have so near a prospect of commemorating. Often are His saints refreshed at a communion table. May you, on this solemn occasion, find His fruit sweet to your taste, and sit under His banner of love!—Ever your affectionate friend,

E. G.

LETTER V.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,

Many thanks for your letters. It is the greatest favour any one can do me to write what the Lord has done for their souls. It is a great matter not to be ignorant of Satan's devices. Numerous indeed they are, and often strong, and like to overcome; but

let us lift our heads with joy, and behold the heavenly land of rest, where the Accuser of the brethren is for ever cast out, and where perfect consolations for ever abound,—where all imperfection in knowledge and in love is eternally done away. “O to be begotten again to the lively hope of this incorruptible inheritance,” and to feel the Lord “directing our hearts to the love of Christ and the patient waiting of Him from Heaven !”

But how difficult a thing to look beyond what is seen and temporal. What need for constant watchfulness, lest deadness, or carnality, or dangerous lukewarmness steal into our desperately wicked hearts! What need for daily and constant prayer for that precious faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for!—that faith which brings invisible things near, and gives the present possession of eternal things! What a comfort that this is the gift of God, and is not left to our willing or working! Did we always keep in mind that it is God in Christ we have to do with, it would encourage us in the warfare. He is a God; therefore He knows our case, and compassionates them that are out of the way,—He can teach our hands to war, make weak and defenceless creatures mighty to conquer.

I hope you and your friend help one another in the way to Zion, and pray daily for and with one another. That you may grow in grace and in mutual comfort and blessedness, is my earnest request to the throne of grace.

E. G.



CHAPTER XV.

Elizabeth Gow, having served her generation, falls on sleep, and is laid unto her fathers to see corruption. “*Lord! now lettest thou Thy Servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.*”

ALL along, the health of Elizabeth Gow was such as to require no small care on her part, and often to awaken the anxious concerns of others. But very much in consequences of the sacrifices she so generously consented to make for the welfare of the Family with whom she served, her delicacy increased as she advanced in years, and long before her autumn, the tree had begun to shed its leaves.

It might have been expected, that when removed to her own establishment, and relieved alike from solicitude and toil, her strength would recruit, and that her days of sanctified leisure would not be few. But her work is finished, though old age be not come; and, as if by a hand that could not do its work too gently, her tabernacle is taken down without either violent disorder, or formed complaint.

Her last illness was a Decline—very gradual, and

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almost imperceptible for a season. But as her slender frame became more and more attenuated, it was quite apparent to those around her, that "the time which now remained" to our Hidden One was short. And this was not less her own conviction—soon admitted, and steadily realized to the end.

At an early stage of her Decay, Elizabeth Gow foresaw its termination, and believed that she had entered the valley which lies between Time and Eternity. Yet was she neither afraid of Death nor impatient of Weakness; for having at the Cross learned to live, the same Cross now taught her how to suffer, and how to die. Her friends were very dear to her, and for their sake she was ready still to "sojourn in Mesech;" but she longed to "be with Christ, which was far better." Her comforts abounded, and she who once had lain on the dust, now stood up; but earth had nothing wherewith to detain one who could remember that she was yet "to inherit all things, having overcome." In no sense was she weary of her Master's work in the body, whilst He had work for her to do; but fain also was she to "enter into rest,"—her salvation won, her mission closed, her triumph sure.

The orphan Family among whom she had spent the strength of her days, and for whom she had poured out her soul in the night season, as "travailing in birth of them, until Christ was formed in their heart," were only drawn more closely to their affectionate Guardian, by the apprehension of her removal; and, along with the many

beside who loved her because she was loved of God, they sought to smooth the pillow, if they could not avert the shaft, of Death. Constantly might one or more of her youthful friends be found either sitting by her chair, or watching at her bedside ; whilst, on the other hand, *her* interest in *them* seemed only to deepen as she saw the moment approaching that would separate them for ever, and, with a mother's fidelity and earnestness, she besought them to follow Christ that they might yet all meet together in the heavens.

Elizabeth Gow had not unfrequently been "in bondage through fear of death," at various stages of her experience, and, like her Saviour in the Garden, she trembled even to look at this cup. But at last, amazement was exchanged for calm anticipation, and she lay without a fear on the banks of Jordan, waiting for the waters to part. Faith vanquished every doubt, and the shadows fled away.

Her mind, too, retained its usual vigour, and with unabated delight she would converse on whatever related to the welfare of her friends, or the prosperity of the Church.

Prayer had at all times been to her a weapon of war, and a well-spring of consolation too. But the nearer she drew to that hour when she would be done with prayer for ever, the more did she seem to relish the privilege and occupy the talent. Ever would she be spreading out the case of individuals by name before the Lord, or wrestling with Jacob-like resolution for a

blessing upon Zion. And the last two days she spent on earth were *wholly* spent in supplication and praise.

Feeling, as her time came to be measured not by days but seconds, that she might now unclasp her hand from that Rod of great strength, on which she had hitherto leant so securely, she took out from under her head her well-worn and much loved Bible, and gave it with hallowed solemnity to a near relation. From that volume she had derived her life, and joy, and hope.—And, as if speaking from the threshold of the city ere she entered into her mansion, with impressive emphasis she said, “*There is not one promise of this Blessed Book which can be experienced in life, but I have experienced it. Not one has failed.*”

Her dying testimony given to God and His Word,—she sang the Twenty-third Psalm, and the silence of death fell upon her lips. At four o'clock on the afternoon of the 17th of October, 1778, she was heard to say, “Come Lord, Jesus;” and He who had “guided her through the wilderness, with His counsel, received her into glory !”





CHAPTER XVI.

Elizabeth Gow having lived for Jesus now sleeps in Jesus till the Dead awake. “*When the time of the Dead is come that they should be judged, Thou, O Lord, God Almighty, wilt give reward unto Thy Servants, and to the Saints, and to them that fear Thy name,—small and great.*”

NO city mourned for Elizabeth Gow,—for her no funeral sermon was preached,—no cypress or marble marks her grave. A few devout men carried forth her dust, and laid it in “the pit of corruption,” to “wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the Body.”

“But though dead, yet she speaketh.” “She speaketh” to the *Ungodly*, shewing them how “the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” And she “speaketh” to *Believers*, assuring them that “faithful is He who calleth, who also will do it.” She speaketh to the Church in a voice of loving encouragement; and she speaketh to the World in a voice of holy warning!

And that her voice may be a voice of gracious power, he who has set in order this Narrative, would now beg of any who may peruse it, that ere they lay it aside,

they would pause for a moment, and ask **HIM** to bless it, who alone can bless.

Simply believing in Christ, *that* was the strength of our Hidden One! Holy living for Christ, *that* was the aim of our Hidden One. The cross brought her complete salvation; and the cross enabled her to glorify God in the flesh. And if the Prince of Life will send such a testimony abroad as a voice from Himself, not only will Elizabeth Gow, "when dead, yet continue to speak," but "though poor she will make many rich."

Her life here was a life of quiet Faith and growing Holiness: Glory and Rest are her portion above. "Absent from the Body—she is present with the Lord"—and when He returns to reign she will be seen in His retinue. But let each of us trace our steps by hers,—realizing the same Hope, and aiming at the same perfection—and ere a few short days are come and gone, We shall join her in the fellowship of the Ransomed. "Through much tribulation" she reached the kingdom, and if we also "pass into a wealthy place through fire and water," we need not think it strange. "God ever chastens for our profit" and perhaps there is not a saint before the throne who does not connect the Harps, and Palms of Heaven with "the thorns of the wilderness, and briers."

Elizabeth Gow had a Brother, whose son, having taken the name "Smith," which is the English for "Gow," became an Independent Pastor at Blackhills, in

the Parish of Skene, not far from Aberdeen, and he died in 1835, having served Christ with fidelity and success in the ministry, for thirty years. Mr. Smith left a Widow, and Three Daughters—the eldest of whom, with her Mother, entered into the joy of their Lord many years ago. The Second Daughter was married to her Father's Successor at Blackhills,—the Rev. A. T. Gowan, A.M.—who left Blackhills for Dalkeith in 1844. The other daughter became the wife of a Mr. Roger, and, after his death, married again. Both the Daughters, as also their Husbands, are now with Christ—who was their only resting-place, and of Elizabeth Gow's Family not one remains. Fain would we detain the Godly ever among us: and instead of the Fathers we would make the children Princes. But if it were “expedient for Christ to go away,” surely it must likewise be so for the Believer: and though the Godly may cease, Grace and Righteousness cannot fail. Never has the world been without a Witness to Truth, and Pardon, and Holiness—neither shall it be, until the reign of Sin is brought to a close in the everlasting Reign of Life !

THE END.



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